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A RHETORIC OF RESENTMENT: DISMANTLING WHITE
SUPREMACY THROUGH DEFINITION, SCHOLARSHIP, AND
ACTION

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design

by
Whitney Jordan Adams
May 2020

Accepted by:
Dr. Cameron Bushnell, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

A Rhetoric of Resentment: Dismantling White Supremacy through Definition, Scholarship, and Action examines the role that Confederate symbolism and ideology has in informing both white supremacist and resentment rhetoric. Using a recently published alt-right text for analysis, I trace how groups affiliated with the alt-right use their version of rhetoric to keep and garner followers. I argue that this rhetoric can be dismantled not only through scholarship, but also through positive pedagogical disturbance, rhetorical listening, and action in the classroom and community. The academic and social outcomes of this dismantling result in a New Dialogic pedagogy, a form of Anti-Racist Pedagogy, which promotes teaching for activism. Teaching for activism and awareness is paramount now; our divided country faces an uncertain future and it is our scholarly responsibility to address this. I end with a section on what I term rhetorical outliers. Through Inverse Enculturation and the idea of the community rhetor and vernacular rhetoric, I give examples of how those in the academy can partner with those in the community to combat the rise in white supremacy and hate groups. Through the use of responsible rhetoric, change can occur.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dear family members that I have lost along the way. In 2002, I lost my father. Shortly after my high school graduation, my dad left this world. His death was untimely and devastating, but I learned a lot from loss at such a young age. I know he is watching me from Heaven, and I know he is very proud of me. I can feel his spirit daily. During my time as a PhD student at Clemson, I lost my Nana and uncle, whom I affectionally referred to as U.D. My Nana was my rock and was a great sense of comfort. I always talked to her daily, no matter where I was currently living in the world. She was so proud of me. U.D. stepped in to guide me as a father would, and I miss him dearly. To the best dad, grandmother, and uncle – this is for you. I love you all so much, but I take comfort in knowing I will see you again one day.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

...the inner light will shine forth from us, and we'll need no other light.

-Goethe

To my mom, Catherine Whittington Adams, my aunt, Shelia A.

Whittington, and to Dee Dolin, I love you so much. Thank you for believing in me and for supporting me as I have engaged in many years of schooling and traveled the world. You have taught me bravery, graciousness, and to see beauty in all things. As I left for college in 2002, my mom packed a Nietzsche book in my belongings, and that served as a catalyst, leading me to pursue both a life of the mind a life of experiences. To Dr. Cameron Bushnell, my chair—you are a saint. I hope to one day be like you. A pillar of light, your kindness, compassion, and intelligence are unparalleled. Your poise and graciousness serve as a model to everyone around you. To the rest of my amazing committee, Dr. David Blakesley, Dr. Abel Bartley, and Dr. Mike Coggeshall, I am eternally grateful. Thank you. Dr. Blakesley, your humor and huge heart have meant the world to me. Dr. Steven B. Katz, words cannot express your influence in my life. A true scholar, gentleman, friend, and colleague. We will always have Proust! To Dr. Cynthia Haynes, Dr. Aga Skrodzka, Dr. Walt Hunter, and Dr. Jordan Frith, thank you for your support and kindness. I would also like to thank my loving “posse”: Eda Özyesilpinar, Diane Quaglia Beltran, Charlotte Lucke, and Oyn Wahyurini. I also want to extend gratitude to Camille Cooper, P.k. Adithya, Dale of Nick’s Bar,

Rodger Bishop, Westley Barnes, Cody Hunter, Victoria Houser, Shauna Chung, Sarah Richardson, and Eric Hamilton. To Dr. Victor Vitanza, thank you for accepting me into RCID—you are the best! Lastly, to Dr. Brian Gaines, my partner in all things. Thank you for your love and constant support. You have believed in my scholarly voice from the very beginning, and that is worth more than gold.

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CHAPTER ONE

ESTABLISHING EXIGENCY: WHITE SUPREMACY ON THE RISE

In this country American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate.

-Toni Morrison

I begin this chapter with a reading of Kenneth Burke by the rhetorician and scholar Cynthia Sheard. She begins her article “Kairos and Kenneth Burke’s Psychology of Political and Social Communication” by saying how for Burke, the study of rhetoric is the study of conflict (291). She recalls Burke’s *Rhetoric of Motives*, where he writes, “If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” (22). The American South, from the beginning of slavery, and before, with the forced taking of Indigenous land, has been a land of conflict. Reconstruction, after the Civil War, was then followed by a legislated system of inequality, known as the Jim Crow Laws, which lasted until 1964. In 1948, the Dixiecrat party was formed by then United States Senator Strom Thurmond. This party flourished throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and in 1957 Thurmond was responsible for the longest Senate filibuster to date. For 24 hours and 18 minutes, Thurmond tried to block the passage of civil rights legislation. Why would Thurmond oppose, so vehemently, the idea of civil rights? It’s easy here to default to common and obvious answers. “He’s a bad

person,” and “He’s a racist,” are common iterations of the types of responses I receive when I have posed this question to others in the past. Yes, these are acceptable answers, but what really prompts hate? How might hate and white supremacy be rhetorically constructed?

Throughout this dissertation I argue that white supremacy is very much socially and rhetorically constructed. White supremacy is an agenda, put forth by people and groups with a very purposeful structure. To some, iterations of white supremacy might seem loosely organized, with various groups coming together by chance. This is not the case. The face of white supremacy is changing as varied groups like incels,¹ neo-Confederates,² paleo-conservatives,³ and others join what they perceive as a noble and worthy cause. I begin this chapter by discussing the American South, primarily the South’s role in Jim Crow laws and the Civil Rights Movement. The South also has obvious connections to the symbol of the Confederate battle flag, as the flag represents the former Confederacy. However, the scope of this dissertation extends far beyond the South. I begin in a centralized location, the South, in order to explain the origin of the Confederate battle flag, and what it stood for. The flag’s blatant connection to

¹ The term incel is a shortened form of “involuntary celibate.” Incels are members of varied online communities, where they consistently blame women for their celibacy. Incels often advocate for extreme violence against women, including rape and murder.

² Another term for Southern Nationalists. Many neo-Confederates argue for the former Confederacy to secede again.

³ A political philosophy that is centered on Christian ethics, nationalism, paternalism, regionalism, and traditionalism (Gottfried and Fleming).

slavery will be discussed, which will serve as a launching point for the flag's modern-day connection to and representation of white supremacy.

Fueled by varying ideologies, at the heart of supremacy is the concept of resentment, a complex human emotion I investigate rhetorically. Around the edges of this network are other groups, like vulnerable high school and college students who are at a very formative stage in their development. As I discuss later in this dissertation, these groups of young people are those that we might be able to reach through pedagogical intervention, before they cross the threshold into full-blown white supremacy. Additionally, in Chapter Five, I provide some examples of individuals and groups that have come out of the stronghold of white supremacy. One riveting example is the Sickside Tattoo Shop in Memphis, Tennessee, where tattoo artist TM Garret offers to cover up past tattoos from extremist groups for free. Garret, a former member of the Ku Klux Klan, now leads seminars and forums on the dangers of racism. His group, Erase the Hate, offers services to those that have left extremist lifestyles. I provide these examples to show how people can experience a change in beliefs, and it is mostly through human interaction with others that this change occurs. The examples I provide usually involve a chance meeting, and through these chance meetings, a shift occurs. This shift manifests itself as a realization in Levinasian Ethics, as individuals realize how they are responsible for others as they encounter them face-to-face. At the core of this is sensibility, and the ability to

respond to others, which John E. Drabinski first studied in his 2001 book *Sensibility and Singularity: The Problem of Phenomenology in Lévinas*. The encounters I discuss produce a type of spontaneous ethical responsibility to others, which is derived from the face-to-face encounter with the Other. Of course, many extremists might never change, but it is important to highlight these examples that can offer hope in an otherwise troubling time. Since 2018, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has tracked more than 1,020 hate groups across the United States (“Hate groups reach record high”).

Sheard articulates from Burke’s *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose* how people are “possessed” by ideologies and traditions. This notion of possession by our own ideologies and traditions is something I investigate throughout this dissertation. I also use Burke’s notion of possession as a framework for much of my argument, suggesting how people do not stop to ruminate on why they defend what they do. Some people will blindly adhere to traditions and ideology without considering *why* they are dangerous. Equally dangerous are the groups that promote monologic⁴ ways of thinking. Through the promotion of monologic thought processes, groups with harmful agendas can continue to promote adherence to tradition and ideology. Upholding questionable “tradition” foments discord, conflict, and what I term a rhetoric of resentment, or

⁴ The monologic is the opposite of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the dialogic. With monologic teaching and thinking, only one voice is heard and privileged (Nesari).

resentment rhetoric. Resentment is often connected to conflict, which is a concept explored by Political Scientist Roger D. Peterson in his book *Understanding Ethnic Violence*. Peterson discusses the emotions of fear and resentment, and how both fear and resentment are related to ethnic violence, which is an area of study that has been largely untouched in his field. Peterson claims this is an area that has been neglected due to the reluctance of political scientists to study the impact of emotion. Emotion has often been the realm of psychology and affective science, but Peterson works to bridge this gap through interdisciplinary research. Rhetoric, too, allows a way in. As a rhetorician that also touches on the study of politics, I study fear and resentment, and how these emotions play a part in the construction of white supremacy, which is also inherently connected to violence. Investigating resentment rhetoric is a major component of this dissertation, but I first return to conflict, and conflict's ongoing role in rhetoric and society.

As scholars, and as humans, we can't ignore conflict or that which causes conflict. I draw comparisons here to Burke's rhetorical study of Hitler and Hitler's rise to power in order to give prominence to the current day. Burke's essay,⁵ "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle,'" which identifies the rhetoric used by Hitler, is of prime importance when considering the rhetorics of conflict and division,⁶ and in my

⁵ Found in the larger collection *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (1974).

⁶ For more on the study of rhetoric and conflict, see Cynthia Haynes's *The Homesick Phone Book: Addressing Rhetorics in the Age of Perpetual Conflict*.

own research as well. Burke “presented his essay before the Third American Writers’ Congress during the peak of a critical debate about fascist rhetoric” (Pauley). This was in New York in 1939; eighty-one years later, the United States finds itself in yet another critical debate on the rise of fascism and fascist rhetoric. An example from Burke’s essay, that of the common enemy, functions within the American South under the rubric of States’ Rights. Using the Confederate battle flag as a symbol for “States’ Rights,” varied forms of Southern sympathizers band together, identifying the common enemy⁷ as anyone that dares to question their use of the Confederate battle flag, including the federal government. These groups interject the phrase “Heritage” into their support and use of the flag, pulling from tradition-bound, socially constructed historical narratives to shut down any type of real dialogic exchange.

This trope of the common enemy was also made apparent through the Jim Crow era South, and during the rise of the Dixiecrat party. The “separate but equal” ideology that permeated the South is a prime example, with the African American community functioning as the enemy that the white people of the South must unite against. The trope is still very much alive and well today, as we see varied groups making use of this narrative to continue to gain traction and followers. I’ll return to Burke later, but I mention him here to highlight his role

⁷ This is related to Burke’s discussion of the scapegoat in *Permanence and Change*. Burke explains how poor whites in the South looked for a scapegoat to blame for their economic situation, and that lynching was used as a form of intimidation during this time (14).

within the larger focus of my research, as I do deal largely with division and conflict, and the rhetorical aspects of division, conflict, and resentment. As we will see, the force of resentment and what I term a rhetoric of resentment has larger implications than just impacting Southern states. As I trace the origin of resentment rhetoric, defining it and providing examples of how it is used, resentments' connection to white supremacy will be made apparent. Overall, by the conclusion of this dissertation, I intend to provide a rhetorical framework for how white supremacy is rhetorically constructed and a model pedagogy to address it.

Chapter One provides a sort of content analysis and overview of recent events, all within the past five years, that speak to the urgency of my research. The events I examine trace the Confederate battle flag's thrust into national and international consciousness in 2015. I also cover how and why the Confederate battle flag has experienced a resurgence as a symbol, and the flag's ongoing connection to current hate and white supremacist groups. It is important to provide an overview of these events as they serve to highlight how Confederate ideology and the use of the Confederate battle flag as a symbol are connected to the changing face of white supremacy, and how the movements are directly related. As I will discuss, the Alternative Right,⁸ which I refer to in this dissertation

⁸ The "Alternative Right," as defined by the Southern Poverty Law Center, "is a set of far-right ideologies, groups and individuals whose core belief is that 'white identity' is under attack by multicultural forces using 'political correctness' and 'social justice' to undermine white people and 'their' civilization."

as their colloquial name, the alt-right, is purposefully reaching toward neo-Confederate groups in order to broaden their impact.

In 2016, this dissertation initially began with an inquiry into Confederate rhetoric, and the force and power of the Confederate battle flag as a symbol. My goal was to define Confederate rhetoric for scholarly purposes. To echo Burke, to combat something, one must have an understanding of it, which was what I had in mind. The continued use of and presence of the flag warrants scholarly research, particularly because of the flag's connection to white supremacy. I am still investigating the power of Confederate rhetoric, but I have expanded on Confederate rhetoric to now include resentment rhetoric, which allows for connections to be made between white supremacy, hate groups, and the alt-right. The recent rejuvenation of white supremacy and the alt-right following both the 2015 Charleston Church Shooting and the 2016 presidential election in the United States is alarming and serves as a launching point for study. Hate groups and the alt-right use components of Confederate rhetoric and have also attached themselves to Confederate ideology and symbolism.

Rhetoric, Racial Hate, and Dissension

As Meta G. Carstarphen and Kathleen E. Welch discuss in their introduction to *Rhetoric, Race, and Resentment: Whiteness and the New Days of Rage*, more focus needs to be placed upon "...the deliberate ways in which rhetoric has been used to foment racial hate and dissension" (255). This is

specifically what this dissertation does. Carstarphen and Welch highlight how following Barack Obama's election the country found itself in a false "postracial state"⁹ (255). While Obama's election signified progress, and of course made a historical impact, we must look at what followed. I turn to June 17, 2015, which is what I consider a recent tipping point for white supremacy, the alt-right, and right-wing Accelerationism.¹⁰ On this particular evening, domestic terrorist Dylann Roof took the lives of nine African Americans at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston, South Carolina. Before carrying out the horrific attack, he posed with the Confederate battle flag on his social media accounts. Roof also expressed a predilection towards the state flag of Rhodesia, and other symbols promoting racism, segregation, and supremacy. Rhodesia, what is now Zimbabwe, existed as a short-lived white minority state, often compared to apartheid South Africa. Roof often positioned the Confederate battle flag with the Nazi flag, therefore supporting so-called Aryan beliefs along with the hegemonic position and power of the white race. This alignment is common and exists for a reason.

Roof's website, titled "The Last Rhodesian" and self-published manifesto, discovered after the massacre, also showcased his hatred and desire for the white race to reign supreme. His notion of a white ethnostate is also found in the

⁹ According to Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Postracial" is a false term that implies race is no longer an issue in America.

¹⁰ Right-wing Accelerationism's goal is to quickly establish a white ethnostate, which began with American neo-Nazi James Mason.

ideology of neo-Confederate groups like League of the South, and in the rhetorical underpinnings of National Policy Institute president Richard Spencer, among others. Furthermore, following the attack, Roof wanted to make it clear he did not regret what he did, as he felt justified due to what he felt were “wrongs” carried out by the African American community. Roof's words before he began the massacre were reported ad nauseam on the seemingly interminable news cycles.

My memory is permanently stained by Roof's defective affirmation: “You rape our women and you're taking over our country. And you have to go.” Roof's license plate bore the image of the Confederate battle flag, and he was quoted telling a former roommate he wanted to start another civil war. Shortly after the massacre and after Roof's obsession with the Confederate battle flag became known, “Confederate” became a trending word on Twitter. Roof's impact on the world is apparent, and this is what he wanted. Twitter, a social media platform with over 48 million users in the US alone, serves as a reflection for what is relevant. As “Confederate” trended, the word, and what is associated with the word, gained traction through this circulation. Studying this circulation is important, due to Roof's rise in Internet popularity and his evolution into a new symbol for hate. As Jenny Edbauer Rice suggests in “Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies,” texts that circulate both transform and condition. Roof's actions not only ignited a

revitalization in interest of the word “Confederate,” but once the word became trending different audiences were impacted, transformed, and conditioned in independent and varying ways. Although most condemned Roof and his actions, this circulation gave white supremacists a chance to elevate and revere Roof in a digital space. Even the constant sharing of Roof’s image, especially the photo where he posed kneeling with the Confederate battle flag, aided in this circulation. For example, as I discuss below, the image of his bowlcut hairstyle is now a registered hate symbol.

I want to talk about Dylann Roof here due to his connection to the Confederate battle flag, and his obsession with the symbol. Roof lived in a South Carolina, where the image of the battle flag flew undisturbed over the statehouse until the year 2000. That year, the flag was moved to a prominent place on the statehouse grounds. Roof’s terrorist attack prompted the beginning of new protests for the Confederate battle flag to be removed from these grounds, located in Columbia, South Carolina. I remember following the social media storm that followed. The removal of the flag seemed to prompt even more division and hatred. What was it about this symbol, and why were some people not ready to let it go from the statehouse? Even after the flag was the favorite symbol of terrorist Dylann Roof, symbolizing white supremacy? Roof’s statement about wanting to spark another civil war also augmented this confusion. Equally troubling is the famed status that Roof was given after the attack by white

supremacist groups. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) lists the “Bowlcut” image, created in the likeness of Dylann Roof’s haircut at the time of the massacre, as a now registered hate symbol. The ADL website states how at first, white nationalists attempted to distance themselves from the attack, claiming that it was a “false flag” operation (“Bowlcut/Dylann Roof”). However, since 2017, there has been a rise in Roof’s popularity, with younger white supremacists heralding him as a hero for the cause. Not only is Roof’s popularity continuing to rise, but there has also been an increased use of the “Bowlcut” as a symbol of identification. To reiterate Burke’s *A Rhetoric of Motives*, identification is the quality of sharing attributes; and, one way this occurs is through common symbols and practices. In the case of the Bowlcut, the symbol represents a common goal of violence, white supremacist values, and the desire to create a white ethnostate through a modern civil war.

Following Charleston, debate opened up about the meaning of the Confederate battle flag as a symbol, and protests commenced to remove the symbol from the South Carolina Statehouse grounds in Columbia. The organization Facing History provides a helpful summary of the flag debate in South Carolina following the shooting. Facing History is an important online presence and nonprofit organization, offering workshops and seminars to help educators in the ongoing fight against bigotry and racism. Due to my desire to make my research accessible to a broad range of readers, it is important to

include organizations like Facing History alongside scholarly sources and research. One of Facing History's online sections titled "Taking Down the Confederate Flag," is found in their segment titled "Race in US History." The organization begins this section with the following:

The stories we tell about the past can have a profound effect on the present. Our choices about how to remember the past and how we use historical symbols can divide communities and also draw them together. In this way, our relationship to the past has the power to transform our present and our future. ("Taking Down the Confederate Flag")

These three powerful sentences ask people to reconsider their relationship with the flag. Although tradition has been historically used as a means to shut down conversations¹¹ about the flag, asking people to reconsider their relationship with the flag *is* a conversation that can be had. I offer ways to productively do this both in the classroom and the community.

Highlighting the Exigency

In the 2016 election, a variety of groups associated with white supremacy, States' Rights, Men's Rights, and white separatist groups strongly identified with Trump. Among these groups, several stand out. The alt-right, neo-Confederate and Confederate organizations, and other groups that support white supremacy and ideology mostly voiced their support for Trump. In short, they identified with

¹¹ Cf. Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery."

him. Interestingly, in 2015, following the events in Charleston, Trump was quoted as suggesting that the Confederate battle flag should be removed from the grounds of the South Carolina Statehouse (Berenson). Trump stated the following when asked about the removal of the flag and if it should be taken down: “I think it probably does, and I think they should put it in the museum,” he replied. “Let it go. Respect whatever it is you have to respect because it was a point in time, and put it in a museum. But I would take it down, yes” (qtd. in Berenson). I offer this information not to support Trump, but rather to highlight his flip-flopping on issues surrounding neo-Confederate ideology and white nationalists. Placing the flag in a museum is an option supported by many, as a means to preserve the flag. However, this preservation should be done as a way to not forget what the flag stood for — slavery and a war that was fought to preserve the status quo of the South. Namely, we should view the flag as a symbol reminding us of the division of the United States, a division that was strongly predicated on the dehumanization of a group of people for economic gain. Returning to Trump’s views on Confederate symbolism, he later voiced support for *not* removing Confederate statues and memorials in 2017 (Berenson).

The most notable recent event of hate following the Charleston Church shooting occurred on August 11 and 12, 2017, as white supremacists descended on Charlottesville, Virginia. The Unite the Right rally, also known as the

Charlottesville Rally or Charlottesville Riots, resulted in three deaths and over 33 non-fatal injuries (Hart and Danner). Those participating in the rally were doing so not only to unify those interested in the American white nationalist movement, but also to oppose the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee from a local Charlottesville park. During this riot, Confederate battle flags were flown and displayed alongside other symbols, including swastikas and other Nazi and neo-Nazi symbols, like the Black Sun. It is important to discuss Charlottesville for several reasons — one is the Confederate flag's prominent place embedded within the center of the riots. The flag's noted and publicized place in the riots, and the fact that the riots took place to protest the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee, help to solidify the connection between white supremacy and neo-Confederate and Confederate ideology.

White Supremacy Sentiments in California

How are the events in Charlottesville mirrored in other parts of the United States? Far away from the former Confederacy and Charlottesville, eight students at Martin Luther King High School in Riverside, California posed with a Nazi symbol in front of a Confederate battle flag (Fry). This incident occurred in February of 2020, as I was still making final edits to both my dissertation and this chapter. According to staff writer Hannah Fry:

The photo shows eight Martin Luther King High School students — some smiling — with a Confederate flag and a Trump 2020 banner. One of the

students is holding a representation of a swastika. Another is flashing a hand gesture the white supremacist groups claim represents the letters “WP,” for white power, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

There are several things to note here. One of course is the name of the high school, named for the famous Civil Rights leader. Another is the students’ placing of the Nazi symbol in front of a Confederate battle flag, connecting the two together. Lastly is the white power sign, which has recently experienced resurrection among white supremacists in California (“Hate on Display™ Hate Symbols Database”). These two incidents — Charlottesville and Riverside— illustrate how racist ideology associated with the flag continues to travel. For example, Guy Mavheria, a parent of a student who attends Martin Luther King High School, stated to *The Press-Enterprise* that this photo is not the first time racist incidents have occurred at the school (qtd. in Fry). He states his children have been referred to as “cotton pickers,” and were also told by other students to “sit at the back of the bus” (qtd. in Fry).

Although Riverside and Orange counties are more conservative,¹² California is often known as a left-leaning, more liberal state, very far removed from the American South and the former Confederacy. The glaring reference to slavery shows how persistent and pervasive racism is, and also highlights the connection between the Confederate battle flag, slavery, and white supremacy.

¹² This is according to the Public Policy Institute of California (*PPIC*).

Later, in Chapter Two, I discuss how proposed designs for the Confederate national flag involved blatant representations of slavery, which explicates how the Civil War was and is connected to the ongoing preservation of slavery. This continues today as the flag continues to serve as a connection to slavery through these very means.

There are other recent events occurring in Southern California schools to also cause alarm. In May 2019, students of the Newport-Mesa Unified School district were part of an investigation resulting from content shared in a private Instagram group (Nguyen). As students exchanged messages on the popular social media platform, one student asked another if they “wanted anything” from an upcoming trip to Alabama and Mississippi. The student then suggested they would purchase a “real confederate flag” for their friend (qtd. in Nguyen). Replies in the group message include the following: “Omfg yes plz” and “What do you want? Do they still sell black people down there?” (qtd. in Nguyen). The first participant in the group then stated they would purchase everyone in the group a “new plantation worker” (qtd. in Nguyen). These messages, although formatted in casual speech using common phrases like “omfg,” indicate several things.

First is the mixing of racism in everyday, casual conversation on a social media platform. Second is the issue that the severity of these messages seems to be lost on those involved. When confronted with the messages, students did not seem to understand the problem of their exchange, with one student

responding to the criticism with the following: “First of all, we are not racist people at all; the people who posted this literally don’t like us and are trying to make us look bad for everything. I’m tired of people always attacking us” (qtd. in Nguyen).

This response is overly problematic, as we see the blame shift. These students genuinely believe it is not what they said that is the problem, but rather the mindset that there is “someone out to get them,” and to make them “look bad.” When students haven’t been exposed to the proper pedagogical tools of intervention to address situations like this, they become further entrenched in their own trained incapacities,¹³ to reference Burke’s *Permanence and Change*. As these trained incapacities are enforced, individuals become even more susceptible to alt-right rhetoric. Students already displaying this type of monologic worldview are the ones that might be swept up in the ideas put forth in *A Fair Hearing: The Alt-Right in the Words of Its Members and Leaders*. *A Fair Hearing*, an edited collection containing essays written by various authors who identify as the alt-right, reads as a smattering of hateful ideology with little grounding in scholarship. Through the use of circular logic and irresponsible rhetoric, the authors in the collection of essays rely on resentment, using carefully constructed, yet empty rhetorical moves that draw on fear and an

¹³ “Trained incapacity” is term first coined by American economist Thorstein Veblen. Kenneth Burke “gave the term an expansive application to human symbol-using” (Wais).

overabundance of emotion. This resentment looks very similar to the type espoused by the students in the previously mentioned Instagram exchange. If students like these are already feeling “attacked,” imagine what might happen if they come across a copy of *A Fair Hearing*. Although *A Fair Hearing* was banned on the popular online retailer Amazon, the book can still be purchased on Barnes & Noble’s website, as well as Walmart eBooks and independent bookseller IndieBound. Therefore, the book can be easily attained just from a quick Google search.

In another related incident, other California high school students arranged cups in the design of a Swastika while playing the popular game of “beer pong” (Levin). To play beer pong, red cups are aligned on opposite ends of a table. Competing teams then try to throw a table tennis ball into the cups of the opposing team. If the ball lands in a cup, the individual on the other team then drinks the contents of the cup. Photos also surfaced on Twitter of students taking part in Nazi salutes above their handmade swastika formed from the cups of beer.

Again, as these students were outed, their responses and the responses of those in the community varied. Many said it was “just a prank,” with the students not realizing the “meaning of their actions” (Levin). When confronted with allegations of racism and bigotry, students again felt they were being “attacked.” Many of the parents confronted, as well as the Newport Beach School

district, were of course concerned about the underage drinking. Although underage drinking is an issue, what is more alarming to me is the unapologetic and unabashed use of the swastika. The sheer number of events involving the hate symbol indicates a renewal of its use, and the symbol has also increased in popularity with young people, many of which are from middle or upper-middle class families. Moreover, what is of dire importance here, is that why, in recent years, there has been not only a surge in this type of behavior, but also a lack of responsibility for the young adults involved. In other words, what makes this sort of behavior possible and appealing? Burke's concept of trained incapacities may help to explain some of this, as he states on page 7 of *Permanence and Change* how trained incapacities function as "the state of affairs whereby one's very abilities can function as blindness." These young adults are oblivious to how their actions impact others — therefore, they exist in a state of metaphorical blindness.

Additionally, in February of 2020, The Center on Extremism, part of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), released their annual report, titled "White Supremacists Double Down on Propaganda in 2019." The year 2019 saw a large increase in reported propaganda from previous years. As the Center on Extremism reports, "the 2019 data show an increase of incidents both on and off campus, with a total of 2,713 cases reported (averaging more than four incidents per day), compared to 1,214 in 2018 – a doubling in activity year over year."

Furthermore, “the highest levels of activity [occurred] in the states of California, Texas, New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Virginia, Kentucky, Washington and Florida” (“White Supremacists Double Down”). Out of these ten states with the highest activity, only three — Texas, Virginia, and Florida — were members of the former Confederacy. These data represent the broad scope of supremacy showing that it is not centralized to one location or region of the country. According to Brian Levin, director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at Cal State San Bernardino, over 40% of Americans claim whites are “under attack” (qtd. in *Los Angeles Times*). This attack logic and what makes this logic possible and believable are also explained throughout this dissertation and serve as the foundation for my work on the rhetoric of resentment. As Levin further explains, many Americans making up this percentage are of a younger generation, like the students at Riverside High School in California. As Levin states, “Some of this is youthful rebellion, but don’t kid yourself: It’s also another example of the sociopolitical mainstreaming of white supremacy and Nazi symbols” (qtd. in *Los Angeles Times*). As both community members and scholars, this mainstreaming of white supremacy and Nazi symbols requires our attention.

Moving to the Former Confederacy

Tennessee has become a hotbed for hate groups and white supremacy/white nationalist activity with several hate groups hosting their annual

meetings there. The State parks of Tennessee are required by law to let *any* group meet on their property. They are also required to provide security, and this security comes from Tennessee taxpayers (Sells). Throughout 2019, several groups supporting white supremacy and white nationalism held meetings across the state. In May 2019, the group American Renaissance rented space at Montgomery Bell State Park, located west of Nashville (Sells). Jared Taylor, as I discuss in Chapter Three, founded American Renaissance. Taylor's group functions as a "self-styled think tank," that claims to engage in serious "scholarship" ("American Renaissance"). Taylor, also one of the authors published in the previously mentioned *A Fair Hearing*, is a self-proclaimed white nationalist. He was also one of the main figures responsible for the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville. American Renaissance's meeting did not go unnoticed, and there was a call to action by several groups, like the left-wing media collective Unicorn Riot, to protest. These protests were obviously well intentioned, yet they did cause the cost of security to increase, as extra law enforcement was needed. This law enforcement was of course focused on providing protection for the members of American Renaissance and those attending the conference. Additionally, it was reported American Renaissance did not pay for the extra security that was required due to these protests (Sells). This leaves their bill to the state taxpayers.

In late June 2019, the National Solutions Conference was held at the

same venue at Montgomery Bell State Park. The conference held June 28-30, 2019, featured Michael Hill,¹⁴ David Duke, and Kevin MacDonald, and was hosted by the Council of Conservative Citizens and the American Freedom Party (Sells). Michael Hill, a former college professor, has been a key figure in the dissemination of white supremacist ideology. In Chapter Three, I discuss his alignment with the alt-right. As the co-founder of the neo-Confederate hate group League of the South, he serves an important role in connecting Confederate ideology to the alt-right. In particular, League of the South was also sought out by the alt-right, showing how aspects of Confederate ideology bolster white supremacy, and vice-versa. Other speakers at the National Solutions Conference included David Duke, a former Grand Wizard of the KKK, and Kevin Macdonald, a Professor of Psychology who is also an anti-Semitic conspiracy theorist. The National Solutions Conference is one of many gatherings that seek to strengthen the overall goal of white supremacy through engagement with a variety of people and groups.¹⁵ This engagement might first seem loose, or even random at times, but as I prove, it is anything but. The varied groups are connected through their ideology, as the alt-right has formed alliances with organizations like League of the South.

Furthermore, in January 2020, Alice Spери wrote a poignant piece aptly

¹⁴ Ironically, according to the SPLC, Hill is a former professor of History. He taught at Stillman College, a historically black college in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

¹⁵ These groups include neo-Confederate groups, the American Freedom Party, Anti-Semites, and others.

titled “The Fire This Time,” drawing on the title of James Baldwin’s seminal text *The Fire Next Time*. Speri begins by reminding us how on March 29, 2019, the Highlander Research and Education Center was burned down. When the flames finally stopped, white supremacist graffiti was found throughout the parking lot. The center, located in northeastern Tennessee, was an important civil rights institution (Speri). The center has played a prominent role in the Civil Rights movement, hosting leading figures like Rosa Parks and the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (Speri). However, in the wake of the vandalism on the center, police have been focusing on the wrong things, according to Speri. With the rise of white supremacy activity in the state, it seems that attention is being misdirected, as focus was placed on the members and activists of the center. For example, members of the center were followed and questioned for their supposed role in the attack (Speri). This represents how police are often biased against people and groups of color, as they automatically placed suspicion on the members of the center.

Overall, I have provided an outline of some of the events that have been occurring over the past several years. I also want to note my use of popular sources in this chapter and throughout this dissertation. Due to my investigation into current iterations of white supremacy it is important for me to use news sources and other popular, non-scholarly sources alongside sources that are academic in nature. The disparity in support for my arguments reflects the

current moment in time while also providing real-world examples that I can blend with theory. Of course, the events I highlighted are not exhaustive. I decided to include the recent events that occurred in California to show the broad circulation of supremacist ideology. Far from the epicenter of the former Confederacy, California is often seen as a liberal refuge. I also chose to focus on events in Tennessee, due to Tennessee becoming a recent hotbed for hate groups and alt-right activity. These events highlight the ongoing exigency of my research, and why we can't stop paying attention to white supremacy. If anything, these groups are becoming bolder and more organized. As the alt-right continues to grow in popularity, it is also bringing in more members from varied groups. As these different groups join together, previous socio-economic and ideological barriers begin to dissolve. For example, many leaders of the alt-right come from well-educated backgrounds, like Jared Taylor. Taylor is a Yale University graduate and went on to attend the Paris Institute of Political Science in Paris, France obtaining a master's degree in international politics ("Jared Taylor"). He is also fluent in Japanese and French ("Jared Taylor"). Taylor cuts a very different figure from those we might associate with neo-Confederate and Confederate groups. For example, his experience abroad and education separates him from many in the American South, where a smaller amount of the population is likely to hold a passport (Florida).

It's interesting to see the alt-right join forces with neo-Confederate groups. Previously, the alt-right has been more insular, with many of its members, like Taylor and Spencer, coming from privileged backgrounds. Educated and financially secure, people like Taylor and Spencer are able to garner other members that fit this mold. Spencer's family is worth millions from farming subsidies, allowing him to lead a very comfortable lifestyle, splitting his time between rural Montana and Washington, DC (Williams). However, realizing that growth in their cause might not come from the "alt-light,"¹⁶ as they had originally hoped, the alt-right began to focus more on Confederate and neo-Confederate themed groups. This was done on purpose, and with direction. The Unite the Right rally was planned in Charlottesville to protest the city's proposed removal of Robert E. Lee's statue located in Market Street Park. Choosing to protest the removal of a statue of Lee was a rhetorical choice, capitalizing on the ongoing debate of the Confederate battle flag and the country-wide trend of questioning whether to take down Confederate statues.

Moreover, many people try to separate the Confederate battle flag from the Nazi flag and other symbols of Aryan supremacy. The Confederate battle flag and the Nazi flag are different symbols historically, having very different origins.

¹⁶ According to the ADL, "The term 'alt lite' was created by the alt right to differentiate itself from right-wing activists who refused to publicly embrace white supremacist ideology." Further explained by Al Jazeera's article "Explained: Alt-right, alt-light and militias in the US," the alt-light "promotes a hardline version of American nationalism and often eschews the openly racist and white supremacist politics advocated by the alt-right."

Nonetheless, if you look at pictures from the Charlottesville riots, the Confederate battle flag is prominently positioned alongside the Nazi flag and other Aryan symbols. This display becomes even more complicated as groups like the United Daughters of the Confederacy publicly condemn displays such as this. This is an issue I will tackle in Chapter Five — namely, how to navigate groups that identify as community organizations but still use and/or display the Confederate battle flag or espouse varying views about the former Confederacy. Although many chalk up the display of the flag to ignorance, or connect it to rebellion, like some groups in Europe,¹⁷ one can't overlook the prominent display of the flag in Charlottesville alongside these other blatant symbols of hate. It is paramount to think about the placement and impact of symbols, which leads us to Chapter Two.

¹⁷ For example, “Southern Italians, inspired by the Civil War, adopted the Confederate battle flag as a sign of rebellion around the time they were absorbed into the Kingdom of Italy in 1861” (Speiser). This is also seen in Northern Ireland, as “the Red Hand Defenders, an extremist protestant paramilitary group, march with the Confederate flag” (Speiser).

CHAPTER TWO

THE STAR-SPANGLED CROSS AND THE PURE FIELD OF WHITE: THE CONFEDERATE BATTLE FLAG, SEMIOTICS, AND RHETORIC

*The Star-Spangled Cross and the pure field of white
Is the banner we give to the breeze,
'Tis an emblem of Freedom unfurled in the right,
O'er our homes and our lands and our seas.*

*We'll stand by the Cross
And the pure field of white,
While a shred's left to float on the air:
Our trust is in God, who can help us in fight,
And defend those who ask Him in prayer.*

*For years we have cringed to the uplifted rod,
For years have demanded our right,
Our voice shouts defiance, our trust is in God,
And the strong arm that gives us our might.
Our hills and our vales with the death shriek may ring,
And our forests may swarm with the foe,
But still to the breeze our proud banner we'll fling,
And to Vict'ry or Death we will go.*

- The Star-Spangled Cross and the Pure Field of White, 1864

Silent Sam

“Tradition does not make [the Confederate battle flag]¹⁸ right or necessary.” The preceding words, spoken by a student from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) during the controversy surrounding the removal of the Silent Sam statue, indicate the ongoing role of tradition in the South. “Silent Sam,” a Confederate monument of an infantry soldier that stood on the grounds of UNC, was constructed in 1913 to remember young male students from the university that died during the Civil War (“Confederate Monument”). Silent Sam was toppled over by students in February 2018 but was then given by the university to the Confederate organization Sons of Confederate Veterans (Herrera). This order was then overturned, as a judge ordered that UNC still legally owned the statue (Herrera). As the fate of Silent Sam was undecided, both former and current students and faculty members expressed their discomfort about the statue. For example, Karl Adkins, one of the first African American students to graduate from the university, stated how “he recalled fighting to integrate restaurants in Chapel Hill and then returning to campus to see Silent Sam” (Levenson). Adkins and other members of the community found the statue imposing — a constant reminder of what they were working to fight against during the Civil Rights Era.

¹⁸ In this chapter and dissertation, when I use the term “Confederate battle flag” I am referencing a modified version of the “Southern cross” that was adapted from Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia. This flag is now the most recognized and used symbol of the former Confederacy.

The same feelings conveyed by Adkins are feelings that students and community members express today. As community members, like those in Chapel Hill, are still fighting racism, the impact of a Confederate monument like Silent Sam works to impede forward progression. How Silent Sam entered the space of the university also adds to this obstruction. I uncovered the full transcription of Julian Carr's speech at the 1913 Dedication of Silent Sam. Carr, a member of the KKK, was also an advocate for the lynching of African Americans (Mullins). Carr began his speech by thanking the United Daughters of the Confederacy for commissioning the statue to be built for the school ("Julian Carr's Speech"). The intent of United Daughters of the Confederacy was to memorialize the young men that died in the war —as mothers, many of the members lost sons in the war.¹⁹ Here, I want to focus on Carr's words. Carr mentioned the importance of Confederate soldiers protecting the Anglo-Saxon race, a rhetorical choice already setting up an "us and them" dichotomy. He also stated the following:

One hundred yards from where we stand, less than ninety days perhaps after my return from Appomattox, I horse-whipped a negro wench until her skirts hung in shreds, because upon the streets of this quiet village she had publicly insulted and maligned a Southern lady, and then rushed for

¹⁹ I would like to address this issue during a fuller ethnography with United Daughters of the Confederacy, as planned for the future.

protection to these University buildings where was stationed a garrison of 100 Federal soldiers. I performed the pleasing duty in the immediate presence of the entire garrison, and for thirty nights afterwards slept with a double-barrel shot gun under my head. ("Julian Carr's Speech")

Carr's speech at the dedication of Silent Sam links the monument to racial violence, as is indicated in the excerpt above. He delineates the Southern woman as a delicate figure, needing protection from the Other. Moreover, he also references tradition:

In our forums, in our halls, in our universities and colleges and schools they tell us, through tradition, song and story of the wonderful deeds of the ancient Greeks and Romans, Thermopylae, Marathon, Platea, of Caesar and his 10th Legion, which carried the Roman Eagle to the confines of the known world, of the chivalric knights of the Middle Ages, of Saratoga and Yorktown, of Cowpens and King's Mountain, of Lodi and Austerlitz, of Napoleon and the Old Guard, of Jefferson Davis and Buena Vista, and Monterey, but there is nothing recorded which surpasses the achievements of the Student Soldiers who wore the gray. ("Julian Carr's Speech")

Carr's focus on tradition is salient, and his focus on ancient Greece and Rome is noteworthy.

As Johann Chapout discusses in *Greeks, Romans, and Germans: How the Nazis Usurped Europe's Classical Past*, "Hitler wrote in Mein Kampf that there was a "racial unity" that linked Greeks, Romans, and Germans" (1). Hitler was particularly enamored with ancient Greece, which is represented through his fascination with Greek architecture and the Discobolus, a sculpture created in bronze by Myron in Greece during the fifth century BC. Carr's focus on the Greeks and Romans serves as an important connection to supremacist beliefs. Just twenty years later, in 1933, Hitler would be appointed Chancellor of Germany, igniting what would be a reign of terror centralized around the superiority of the white race. Carr conflates the Civil War with the battles of Greece and Rome. This way of thinking is supported as many consider the South as the birthplace of American civilization and heritage,²⁰ and Greece and Rome are often referred to as the beginnings of European civilization. Returning to the words of the UNC student, their words highlight the ongoing role of tradition in supporting troubling ideology. Like in the case of Silent Sam, tradition has played an important role in supporting Confederate ideology and symbols, and the Confederate battle flag is a seminal part of this ideology.

Studying the Confederate Battle Flag as a Symbol

The Confederate battle flag is perceived by many as a racist symbol of the South, but often the racist meaning and implications of the flag are left out of

²⁰ I explain this concept later via historians Richard B. Harwell and Dewey W. Grantham.

discourse surrounding the flag due to the powerful rhetorical force of tradition. Tradition has a way of masking racism, as Frantz Fanon articulates in *White Skin, Black Masks*. For example, he recalls that it is “tradition to which anti-Semites turn in order to ground the validity of their “point of view” (92). Furthermore, our current political climate makes rhetorics of division and racism more commonplace, as I explicate in Chapter One. The flag continues to be a symbol of this rhetoric. Why do we (as scholars) want/need to understand the symbol of the Confederate battle flag? From what angle should we approach this question? I contextualize the flag in broader terms as a part of what I term Confederate rhetoric, which is also part of a larger rhetoric of resentment — rhetoric that espouses a victimhood mentality of groups that would generally be considered non-marginalized and part of a privileged majority.

And yet, these groups, like young fraternity members of the Kappa Alpha Order, attest they are the victims when they are told they cannot use the symbol of the battle flag to represent their fraternity. They express resentment when they are told they cannot carry on with fraternity traditions that honor and emulate the antebellum South. Additionally, other organizations, like League of the South, and others associated with the alt-right, cling to victimhood status as they insist that minorities are overtaking the white race. In the following chapter, I discuss how the alt-right plays on resentment rhetoric and victimhood for the purpose of gaining support for their cause. They do so by avowing that a “brutal culture war”

is taking place in America. By suggesting that the white race and Western civilization are under assault, they are able to gain followers as different individuals come together under an umbrella of victimhood status.

Moreover, white supremacist groups and the alt-right have past and recent ties to the Confederate battle flag. One recent example is the small town of Asheboro, North Carolina. Sandhya Somashekar, a writer for *The Washington Post*, spoke to Asheboro resident Dexter Trogdon Jr. about “upticks” in racial tension in the town following the 2016 election. First and foremost, Trogdon spoke of an influx of Confederate battle flags in the town. Following this resurgence and influx of flags, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) announced plans to burn a cross in Asheboro. Cross burning, used as a form of intimidation by the Klan beginning in the 1900s, is used to send a message of fear and dominance to African Americans and other minority groups. The cross burnings function for dual audiences — on one hand, they function as a spectacle for those affiliated with the Klan; on the other hand, they are used as a visual representation of power and hatred meant to intimidate the Other. Moreover, Trogdon spoke of hearing white people in the town espousing troubling rhetoric — namely, “that slavery wasn’t so bad for African Americans” (Somashekar). This way of thinking —that slavery “wasn’t so bad,” is an example of what I describe as “frozen loci,” a concept I fully explain in Chapter Four. Frozen loci are stagnated ideas and ideology that can be fractured and eventually dismantled through pedagogical

practices such as rhetorical listening and the notion of positive disturbance. I reference this narrative from Asheboro, which is one of many narratives found within the states of the former Confederacy and beyond, to highlight the flag's connection to white supremacist ideology. The upticks in racial tension correlated with more instances of community members displaying the Confederate battle flag. Following these upticks and the increase of publicly displayed flags was the announcement made by the KKK to burn the cross.

The Confederate Battle Flag and Semiotics

However, what is difficult to unpack here is the flag's connection to other groups: the fraternity Kappa Alpha Order, the organization Sons of Confederate Veterans, and the American heredity organization of Southern Women, the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Although these groups are not categorized as white supremacy groups, or hate groups,²¹ I do discuss how the ways these groups use the Confederate battle flag, or support the flag, are problematic. These groups use the flag in ways that propagate a type of white Southern semiotics, hearkening back to Lost Cause and antebellum rhetoric. For example, I discuss specific examples of exposed resentment rhetoric by past and current members of Kappa Alpha Order in Chapter Four, and later in this chapter I discuss how United Daughters of the Confederacy played a part in controlling the

²¹ For clarity, I use the Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) website to determine what organizations are deemed hate groups. Although the Sons of Confederate Veterans are considered by many to be a white nationalist group, the SPLC does not consider them to be a hate group.

material presented in history textbooks in the South. By manipulating how historical material was presented, schoolchildren took a Southern perspective as true and became entrenched in Lost Cause Ideology, developing an attachment to a set of beliefs that presented the South as noble and just in their fight against the Union.

What is so damaging here is the continuation of these beliefs, fostering both victimhood and resentment rhetoric through a re-arrangement of historical inaccuracies. Sons of Confederate Veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy circulate these beliefs through States' Rights Rhetoric, as both groups largely adhere to the notion that the Civil War was fought for the preservation of States' Rights. For example, the Sons of Confederate Veteran's website lists the following as the reason for the Civil War: "The preservation of liberty and freedom was the motivating factor in the South's decision to fight the Second American Revolution." There is also the replacing of "Civil War," with the term "Second American Revolution." This is a rhetorical choice on the part of the organization, as they replace the negative connotation of treachery and betrayal that a Civil War implies with the more positive connotation of a revolution. This rhetorical choice prompts followers of Sons of Confederate Veterans to view the Confederacy as "revolutionaries," pushing back against what they saw as a dominating Union that wanted to control their rights and livelihood. On their website, there is no mention of slavery.

These beliefs are also continually circulated as groups like League of the South,²² designated by the SPLC as a hate group, espouse that the white race is under attack. For example, the following information can be found on the League of the South's official website:

We will all have been erased and our birthrights and those we intend to hand down to our children will have been given to foreigners and strangers who have no love for our way of life. We are being purposefully replaced by people who hate the Bible, they hate our ancestors, they hate our families, and they hate us with such a passion they would stop at nothing to see our culture and bloodline eradicated forever. This is why it is absolutely imperative that we rally what is left of our people, our resources, and every last vestige of Western Civilization in Dixie; to stand together and secure a future in which OUR culture can survive, dominate and thrive. (*League of the South*)

League of the South proposes that the only solution to this "threat" is complete "cultural as well as political secession." They then indicate that this secession is a "moral" choice, which furthers the notion that whites are the victims and that the "right thing" must be done to ensure their protection. League of the South targets anyone that is not "white" and Christian, as is portrayed in the rhetorical choice of

²² League of the South has their own version of the Confederate battle flag, a black St. Andrews cross on a white field. However, following the 2015 Charleston church shooting League of the South became one of the main groups harboring support for the mainstream iteration of the battle flag (*League of the South*).

“they” in the above excerpt. Also, the rhetorical use of “we” and “they” sets up a cultural and racial dichotomy, which ends with a call to “rally” what is “left of” white Southerners. There is also the veiled reference to ancient Greece and Rome, as League of the South wants to consolidate all that is left of Western Civilization into “Dixie,” as the keeper of civilization. The all capitalized “OUR” serves as a synecdoche for Dixie, as both are umbrella terms for the League of the South’s version of Western Civilization. League of the South ends with a call to action, a common rhetorical move found in conclusions, to make sure this does not happen.

Why not abandon study of the Confederate battle flag, as many of us might like to? Why study how varied groups and organizations use the flag? I’ve been met with some resistance, as people claim that talking about the flag, even in a scholarly context, provides the flag with even more power. I disagree — a rhetorical reading of the flag reveals its ongoing importance and why groups and individuals continue to use and identify with the symbol. Overall, this chapter investigates the rhetorical force of the Confederate flag, which is manifested through the power given to the symbol by the groups that use it. I also use a Burkean lens to further study the flag as a symbol and why it continues to be used, re-used, and fetishized. According to Kenneth Burke in his article “Definition of Man,” man is a “symbol-using animal” (491). Burke goes on to explain how man is “...separated from his natural condition by the instruments of

his own making” (407). Symbols, serving as these instruments of man’s own making, separate man.

The Confederate battle flag, used through different generations, contexts, situations, events, states, and countries is perhaps one of the most recognized, and powerful symbols that man uses. The rhetorical study of the flag has also become politicized, as its use has increased since the 1960’s Civil Rights protests into the 2015 Charleston church shooting and the 2016 presidential election in the United States. The flag travels through time and media, emanating an unparalleled force of rhetorical power. This rhetorical power has recently gained even more momentum following the election of Donald Trump, as I show in the previous example of the town of Asheboro, North Carolina. The Confederate battle flag is often seen in tandem with Trump’s name and commodities supporting Trump, which is something I experienced firsthand when I attended a Civil War Weekend in Abingdon, Virginia.

During the weekend of July 27-28, 2019, I met with Civil War reenactors as they gathered on The Abingdon Muster Grounds, an area that was occupied by Union troops later in the war. Some individuals were there to educate the public on topics like how musicians and music played a part in the war. Others gave interactive sessions demonstrating daily life for soldiers, showing how they slept, ate, and took part in other mundane activities. Others came to Abingdon to sell a variety of items. I understand their need to make a living, but I did find the

vast array of items connecting Trump and the Confederate battle flag to be interesting. For example, I saw a fabricated gold one-thousand-dollar bill with Trump's face imposed on it under a Confederate battle flag sticker with an eagle positioned over the flag. Diagonal from the gold Trump bill was a bumper sticker with the image of the Confederate battle flag with the following words: "I salute the Confederate flag with affection, reverence and undying devotion to the cause for which it stands." Many of the items, like the sticker I just mentioned, employ Pathos to connect with potential buyers. Terms like affection and undying devotion are often used when talking about people we love and care about, so it was disconcerting to see these words attached to the symbol of the flag.

Rhetorical Invention of the Confederate Battle Flag

Much of the current rhetorical invention of the Confederate battle flag is a means of re-narrating and reinforcing the white dominant culture and semiotics of the American South, therefore reflecting tensions within the localities of the South. These tensions are centered on racial inequality and the lingering impact of Jim Crow and forced segregation. The flag moves through different discourses, communities, disciplines, and also specific discourse communities, but always returns to its place of upholding white/hegemonic power, unless it is subverted or wittingly reclaimed. This dissertation also discusses some of these subversions, analyzing their impact and what they mean from a rhetorical standpoint. Ultimately, I suggest that even when the flag is subverted, it can

arguably not be wholly reclaimed or reconditioned, as Lynn Casmier-Paz states. The national flag of the Confederacy's creation to support a pro-slavery republic (Bonner) makes a total redemption of the flag impossible. Like the Nazi flag, the sinister implications the flags associated with the Confederacy and what it stood for stand in the way of any groups hoping to wholly reclaim the flag.

However, this does not take away from the rhetorical impact of these reclamation efforts. One specific example is clothing designers Sherman Evans and Angel Quintero. Sherman Evans, an African American, and Angel Quintero, a Cuban American, started the Nu South clothing line in 1999, in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1999, Evans and Quintero were quoted with saying they wanted to change race relations in the country with their bold and unique clothing designs, featuring their logo of the "Confederate flag in the black, red, and green colors of the African liberation movement" (Lundegaard). To Evans, the creation of the clothing line represented a type of closure, as he was able to put his own stamp on the controversial symbol (Lundegaard). Evans and Quintero's protest of the flag was powerful, but the clothing line is now defunct. Although the symbol was not entirely converted or redeemed through their company, their actions still represent an important type of resistance through creation and activism.

History as a Monologic Force

Situating the meaning of the flag in United States and Southern history (and not in the history of racism, or the history of African Americans, or anything

else) is an important component of the conversation surrounding the flag as a symbol. Situating the flag within the context of History has promoted a monologic understanding of the flag and the flag's meaning. I use a capital "H" here to dictate the bureaucratic history of the victors, which is a common theme as history is often presented from the narrative of those who "won," or yielded the most power. This is interesting, because the Confederacy did not win the Civil War. Although the South lost the war, Lost Cause narratives, beginning in 1889 (Simpson), still propagate a Southern History (with a capital H). As John A. Simpson articulates in his article "The Cult of the 'Lost Cause,'" "By 1913 Confederate nostalgia had resurrected Southern pride and self-confidence which lay dormant for over forty years and permanently stamped the cult of the 'Lost Cause' upon the national character" (350). Furthermore, citing from historians Richard B. Harwell and Dewey W. Grantham, Simpson articulates the belief that white Southerners felt that American heritage rests largely in the South (354). Due to this hegemonic slant of Southern history, I suggest that the flag has received a free pass to exist as a "harmless" symbol — a symbol that people say merely represents history and heritage. Drawing on this, much of the scholarly work within Southern history and the Lost Cause focuses on the monologic, ignoring engagement with African American voices, or African American scholarship.

In Chapter Four, I address these gaps in scholarship through what I term New Dialogic Pedagogy. Because tradition and heritage usually shut down conversation without allowing for questions or productive or proactive discourse, intervention through unique pedagogy is needed. Some people won't change their mind about the symbol of the flag or about Lost Cause narratives, but I have hope that university students, when equipped with new ways of knowing, making, and doing might begin to think differently about the way that History/history is presented.

In "The Georgia Confederate Flag Dispute" historian J. Michael Martinez examines how the Confederate battle flag was not always considered a specific symbol of racism as he traces the historical meaning of the flag. For example, he claims how "'Heritage preservation' traditionalists see themselves as guardians of the southern inheritance of honor and chivalry..." (200). Martinez explains that the flag experienced a resurgence during the Jim Crow (1877-1965) and *Brown v. Board of Education* eras to represent the racism and division we connect it with today. However, to some, the battle flag has always been a symbol of racism. Journalist, author, and public intellectual Ta-Nehisi Coates highlights this in a 2017 lecture he gave at the College of Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina. His lecture, titled "A Deeper Black: Race in America," talks about the dangers of separating the original historical use of the flag from racism (Pan). According to Coates, "Not only was slavery the country's driving economic

engine, it was a social institution that white people bonded over, comparable to homeownership today” (qtd. in Pan). Furthermore, “Until Americans can understand this, ‘you might begin to see how one might be attached to the most terrible symbol of white supremacy this country has ever produced — the Confederate flag’” (Coates qtd. in Pan). It is imperative here to analyze the last segment of this quote. Coates describes the battle flag as “the most terrible symbol of white supremacy this country has ever produced” (qtd. in Pan), a sentiment far different from the “heritage not hate” rhetoric employed by many white groups promoting the historical importance of the flag as a symbol of heritage and remembrance for Confederate soldiers that died in America’s Civil War. By calling out the flag as a symbol of white supremacy, Coates presents a view previously underplayed in the context of Southern history.

Through my research, I find that past flags of the Confederate States of America have been consistently represented as “Historical” symbols time after time, without allowing space for a dialogic narrative from more underrepresented groups. Robert E. Bonner’s book *Colors and Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South*, originally published in 2002, delves into proposed designs for the first Confederate national flag: some hoped the Confederacy would unfurl a banner that would “make clear that the Confederates were establishing a proudly proslavery republic” (48). One group from the South Carolina railroads suggested a design that, “displayed black slaves picking cotton on one side of its eighteen-

foot length and slaves rolling cotton bales on the other” (Bonner 24). These designs highlight the Confederacy’s pro-slavery sentiments. Through these examples, we see the overt connection between support for the Confederacy and support of slavery.

This helps to negate the common argument often put forth by Sons of Confederate Veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy that the Civil War was fought over States’ Rights and not for the continuation of slavery. Furthermore, at the center of this discourse is the issue that although white Southerners might not articulate or personally identify with the battle flag as a specific symbol of racial conflict or explicit racism, they are forgetting that thought itself, that thinking, should not be homophonic. Political theorist Andrew Robinson, writing for the online publication *Ceasefire*, can enlighten us here:

A monological world is made up of objects, integrated through a single consciousness. Since other subjects have value only in relation to the transcendent perspective, they are reduced to the status of objects. They are not recognized as ‘another consciousness’ or as having rights.

Monologism is taken to close down the world it represents, by pretending to be the ultimate word.

This idea of the “ultimate word” is key to understanding my current argument around the Confederate battle flag as a symbol. The ultimate word is the “historical word.” And that is part of the problem of how history (especially the

concept of capital “H” history) is written, as African American voices are and have been consistently left out.

I return here to the Southern heredity organization United Daughters of the Confederacy. Members of the organization have played a part in influencing the past content of history books within the South, promoting positive rhetoric of the “Lost Cause” which prompted school children to gain a personal attachment to the Confederate cause, even after the war ended. As historian Abel Bartley explores in *Keeping the Faith: Race, Politics, and Social Development in Jacksonville Florida, 1940-1970*, following the Civil War, whites in the South basically rebuilt a social system based on white supremacy. Bartley uses Jacksonville as an example, yet this occurred throughout the South.²³ This supremacy was also maintained and enforced in the school system; segregation was required in all Southern states. United Daughters of the Confederacy served as an important force in keeping this segregation alive.

Greg Huffman, an attorney and a writer for the organization “Facing South,” discusses this topic in his article “Twisted Sources: How Confederate propaganda ended up in the South’s schoolbooks.” Huffman states that with permission of schools, the United Daughters of the Confederacy would promote

²³ This is still experienced today. As sociologist Teresa J. Guess articulates, “Racism is...reflected in differential educational opportunities, economic differentials between whites and non-whites, residential segregation, health care access, and death rate differentials between whites and non-whites” (652).

essay contests with topics like “The Origin of the Ku Klux Klan” and “The Right of Secession.” Huffman notes that submissions for these essay contests were often in the thousands. Furthermore, Huffman explains that in 1919, Sons of Confederate Veterans set up a committee to “promulgate the Lost Cause version of history through textbooks.” The members of United Daughters of the Confederacy were part of this, and with Mildred Lewis Rutherford²⁴ at the helm, the committee became known as the Rutherford Committee (Huffman). Huffman articulates that in 1919, the Rutherford Committee set the standards “for what was acceptable in a history textbook — the Lost Cause mythology distilled into accessible bullet points and blurbs, backed by cherry-picked quotes from professors, politicians, newspapers, and period speeches.” Many of these books were used up until the 1980s, with Mississippi as the last state to adopt a “textbook that veered from the Lost Cause narrative” (Huffman).

My research on the United Daughters of the Confederacy also led me to the group “Children of the Confederacy,” a subset of the organization. Their creed,²⁵ found on their website, is listed below:

Because we desire to perpetuate, in love and honor, the heroic deeds of those who enlisted in the Confederate Services and upheld its flag through

²⁴ As Historian Sara H. Case explains in “The Historical Ideology of Mildred Lewis Rutherford: A Confederate Historian’s New South,” Rutherford was the “long-serving national historian of the United Daughters of the Confederacy” (599).

²⁵ This creed was also found on a plaque inside the Statehouse in Austin, Texas. The plaque was removed in January 2019 after state politicians voted to have it taken down (Moreno).

four years of war, we, the children of the South, have united in an Organization called the “Children of the Confederacy,” in which our strength, enthusiasm, and love of justice can exert its influence.

We, therefore, pledge ourselves to preserve pure ideas; to honor the memory of our beloved Veterans; to study and teach the truths of history (one of the most important of which is that the War Between the States was not a rebellion); and always to act in a manner that will reflect honor upon our noble and patriotic ancestors.

I include this creed, word for word, due to the specific language and relevance of what is being perpetuated within it. There is reference to those who upheld the flag of “Confederate Services,” as well as to studying and teaching what the group perceives as the “truths of history.” There are also the Pathos-heavy words “strength, enthusiasm, and love of justice.” It makes sense for the group Children of the Confederacy to be associated with the maternal United Daughters of the Confederacy rather than their counterpart Sons of Confederate Veterans. This affiliation is another connection to Pathos that is not present in Sons of Confederate Veterans.

In Chapter Five I discuss the beginnings of a possible ethnography of United Daughters of the Confederacy, providing an analysis of the group and why women continue to join and identify with the organization. I wanted to investigate why the group still remains popular in 2020, and what draws modern

women to join. I also wanted to investigate what the group means to members today: How is United Daughters of the Confederacy defined as a historical group? Is it a social group? Was joining a familial expectation? What role does the Confederate battle flag as a symbol play in the modern organization? These are just some of the questions I had when wanting to begin this ethnography, which I plan to extend into a longer study and monograph.

Kappa Alpha Order's Connection to the Symbol of the Confederate Battle Flag

Another group with connections to using the symbol of the Confederate battle flag is the fraternity Kappa Alpha Order.²⁶ Kappa Alpha, as an organization, was founded at what is now Washington and Lee University. Kappa Alpha prides itself on being a “Southern” fraternity, mostly due to their connection to and idolization of Robert E. Lee and the Confederate battle flag, which I explain later in this section. Here, I want to situate Kappa Alpha’s relationship with history within a broader context of how tradition is used and viewed in the South. One example is the “Traditions Never Die” Week which is articulated on Kappa Alpha’s website (specifically referencing the Nu Chapter at Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama). To quote from their website:

Every Spring around the beginning of April, we turn back the hands of time to when the Southland both prospered and flourished. The celebration

²⁶ Parts of this dissertation chapter appear in and are adapted from my book chapter “Old South Reckoning: The Case of Kappa Alpha’s Old South Balls,” part of the edited collection *Reconstructing the South: Critical Regionalism and Southern Rhetoric*, to be published by the University of Memphis Press.

begins on Saturday with our invitation ceremony and proceeds through the following Saturday. The week is filled with excitement and splendor provided by band parties, Casino Night, yard socials, and a trip to the Braves' game. As Kappa Alphas, we cherish this time to celebrate our southern roots and embrace the embodiment of the southern spirit. Here, we see a monologic, or single-consciousness reference to the "Southland" and time when this land both "prospered and flourished." This prospering was made possible by slaves, yet there is no reference to this on the website. The embodiment of the southern spirit is seen as a celebration and glorification of the past, again reinforcing a kind of hegemonic "last word." Additionally, these members are far removed from the original "Southland" they seem so intent to honor and mimic through a week dedicated to tradition and nostalgia. Issues concerning what happens to unchecked nostalgia have been widely analyzed in literary studies and other fields.

Rafael Miguel Montes delineates the plight of unchecked nostalgia as it "locks identities in place and . . . [arrests] forward progress in the social and historical arena" (qtd. in Glassman 224). Similarly, Tara McPherson suggests in *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*, locations become frozen "...in the service of nostalgia" (129). This stagnation of identity and location, like in the example above, is shown to be especially fragmentary, non-obvious, and ironically thin in the context of college campuses

and fraternities. Rather than receiving a complete antebellum “world,” some college students are often happy just to defend white privilege and its icons devoid of a broader context or historical metanarrative. This nostalgia is connected to the semiotics of whiteness, as members yearn for a past that they were not a part of. The “Traditions Never Die” week functions as a type of simulacrum,²⁷ representing an antebellum period that no longer has an original.

Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen have researched the phenomenon of predilection for homogeneity, which pop culture writer Kate Dries quotes. Their article, “The Political Legacy of American Slavery,” investigates the long-term impact of slavery on those living in the South, which is also tied to “tradition” and monologic ways of thinking. They state the following in their abstract: “Whites who currently live in Southern counties that had high shares of slaves in 1860 are more likely to identify as a Republican, oppose affirmative action, and express racial resentment and colder feelings toward blacks” (621). This suggests the impact of heritage in the American South; the research of Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen proves interesting because they open up a conversation about why white Southerners think what they think, therefore attempting to engage with the past in relation to how it impacts the present and future. As Coates states in his previously mentioned speech at the College of

²⁷ For more on the concept of the Simulacrum see Jean Baudrillard’s 1981 philosophical treatise *Simulacra and Simulation*.

Charleston, “I was asked earlier what we could do to move forward more than anything” (qtd. in Pan). He continues: “And the thing I said is there is no hope if we can't face up to the narrative, if we can't actually admit who we are. If we can't actually admit what happened, there is no hope” (qtd. in Pan). This admittance of “who we are” calls on white Southerners, and other groups and individuals who use the flag, to engage with what is really hidden behind the guise of tradition. Of course, this won't work with all groups, but it is a place to start. Harkening back to Coates's description of the Confederate battle flag as one of the most racist symbols the country has ever produced, movement forward must also include questioning why the flag is still used as a popular symbol and mode of identification.

I pause here to articulate my own interest in the Confederate battle flag as a symbol. As an undergraduate at the University of South Carolina, I was put in contact with different layers of racialized memory—on a campus where nearly 30% of the students identify as African American (“Demographics”), another group of students walked around with t-shirts emblazoned with an image of General Robert E. Lee over a Confederate battle flag. These students were mostly members of the fraternity Kappa Alpha. Women also wore these shirts — for example, if a woman went to a fraternity event or party as a date, she would often get a t-shirt as well. The campus is mere blocks from the State Capitol dome where the Confederate battle flag was raised in 1961, a gesture both

opposing the Civil Rights Movement and celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Civil War. The flag flew on these grounds until the Massacre of the Charleston Nine at Mother Emmanuel AME Church on June 17, 2015. Perhaps due to the racist irony, Lee was depicted on the shirts I saw back in 2006 wearing Ray-Ban sunglasses. I interpreted this as a “casual,” or “cool” racism. In my mind, the fraternity t-shirts functioned as objects of conspicuous consumption.²⁸ Only students affiliated with the “best” and most popular Southern fraternities and sororities seemed privy to these shirts and the lifestyle that seemed to go along with it. As a transfer student from a small liberal arts college in Ohio, I wasn’t sure why these shirts existed in the first place, or why only certain groups of people were able to wear them. It was these experiences and interactions at the University of South Carolina that initially sparked my interest in the symbol of the Confederate battle flag.

Through my time at the University of South Carolina, I was able to personally experience the power that Kappa Alpha held as an institutionally supported organization. This relates to the notion of Althusser’s Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), explored in his 1970 essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” Althusser calls “Ideological State Apparatuses a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of

²⁸ Term coined by the economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen in his 1899 book *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions*.

distinct and specialized institutions.” Public and private schools are part of this ISA, in what Althusser terms the “educational ISA.” Fraternal organizations like Kappa Alpha, part of the larger educational ISA, function by ideology. Althusser claims that Ideological State Apparatuses “also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic.” They reinforce “ideal” social formations, and in the case of KA the fraternity is reproducing elitism as many former members of the fraternity enter into local and state politics.²⁹ For example, the University of South Carolina’s Kappa Alpha website lists former Congressmen Robert W. Hemphill and Floyd Spence as some of their distinguished alumni (“Rho Chapter”).

Kappa Alpha Order and History

The Kappa Alpha Order, or simply “KA,” has 150 chapters in the Southern United States, and 17 beyond the region (“Active Chapters”). With a foundation at Washington and Lee University, Robert E. Lee himself is dubbed the “spiritual founder” of the organization (a tradition since 1923) and the root organization (Kuklos Adelphon) is shared with the Ku Klux Klan. Although the fraternity was founded in Virginia, the organization is considered one of the most prestigious fraternities within universities in South Carolina and beyond. Members today would be quick to differentiate Kappa Alpha, with its gentlemanly respect for Lee,

²⁹ Also, the current governor of Tennessee, Bill Lee, is a former member of Kappa Alpha Order. Lee made recent headlines in 2019, as a yearbook photo from Auburn University was uncovered. In the photo, Lee was wearing a Confederate uniform.

from the virulent racism of the Klan. Yet the preservation of antebellum ritual, frequent reference to Lost Cause mythology, and continual racist incidents by individual members and sometimes small groups frustrate such distinctions frequently.

Recently, a group of University of Mississippi³⁰ KAs shared a photograph of themselves with rifles around the bullet-ridden memorial to Emmett Till (Vigdor) — a memorial that has consistently been vandalized to the point where it is now bulletproof, made of steel, and weighs 500 pounds (Ortiz). It wasn't until 2008 that Till's kidnapping and subsequent torturing and lynching was marked by a memorial in the area where the horrific hate crime took place. The very pointed posing of the Kappa Alpha members in front of this sign, posted on social media, highlights the organization's ongoing fraught relationship with what the members might see as the "casual and cool" racism I previously discuss. In the photo, the young men were seen smiling as they posed in front of the memorial, either oblivious to, or hoping to stoke, the media storm that would happen later.

It is important to interrogate the preservationist rhetoric that allows for such horrific acts of memory vandalism and brotherly defenses of casual or "cool" racism to happen. This interrogation happens from the position of rhetorical analysis, analyzing the symbolic artifacts of discourse that these young men are

³⁰ In 2003, the University of Mississippi retired its former mascot named "Colonel Reb." Colonel Reb was a plantation owner with a white goatee and cane.

using. Part of this preservationism is not surprising to scholars of commemoration and communication. As Stuart Towns suggests in *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause*, rituals such as Confederate Memorial Day, Confederate veteran reunions, and the ongoing dedication of Confederate monuments propagate a white, Southern worldview necessary for a Lost Cause narrative. Yet what is different about Kappa Alpha's deployment of Lee and the flag is a specific type of irony, without reference to a broader political or social need for Confederate commemoration or explicit white supremacy politics. In short, it survives as a monologic rhetoric, within the guise of "tradition," to shut down engagement with marginalized voices and ways of thinking. This becomes clear in reviewing forums where Kappa Alpha members reply to accusations of racism and upholding an ideology of systemic oppression — which I fully address in Chapter Four. Recent events like the Kappa Alpha members posing in front of the Emmett Till memorial augment the importance of a continued investigation into the self-referential rhetoric circulated by this organization, both past and present. Within this self-referential monologic³¹ rhetoric is the inability to holistically examine the past within the complex constructed framework of the American South.

³¹ I use the same definition here as I do in Chapter One. The monologic is the opposite of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the dialogic. With monologic teaching and thinking, only one voice is heard and privileged (Nesari).

To help to explain self-referential rhetoric, I turn to Yameng Liu's article "Rhetoric and Reflexivity." Liu talks about the concept of "self-turning," and how the concept of self-turning might be paralyzing. This inability to reconsider, which functions as a metaphorical paralyzation, is connected to the ongoing perpetuation and augmentation of a nostalgic antebellum imaginary worldview. Kappa Alpha's frozen loci of argument is apparent, as yearning for the past is ironically detached from larger antebellum contexts through fraternity documents, social events, and social media postings. In other words, Kappa Alpha shrouds their history just enough, even to its members as "insiders," that a broader critique of Lost Cause rhetoric is somewhat lost. Lee, plantation culture, and the Confederate battle flag are synecdoches for the white privilege of membership; reasoning into broader aspects of Southern history is mostly lost in the defensive arguments that members often espouse.

Kappa Alpha Order reminds us that universities in large part reflect culture in ways that lock in place older notions of gender by excluding women from important circles of power, class by excluding non-dues-paying members and most obviously race, by de facto excluding minority students. Since Kappa Alpha's founding, the fraternity has initiated well over 150,000 members (Huston). Kappa Alpha's influence on the cultural makeup of the South and college campuses is undeniable, yet scholars of Southern history and culture have done little to include them alongside the Klan or Confederate groups as

primary narrators of the Lost Cause. And yet Kappa Alpha is directly related to Lost Cause nostalgia and Confederate ideology.

The first fraternity was founded at the College of William and Mary on December 5, 1776. American fraternities originally began as social clubs and debating groups, bringing together young men with common interests. Although fraternity life flourished in American Universities, it was halted during the Civil War, as most young men were needed for battle. Fraternities in America are tied to heritage and tradition, as groups developed secret handshakes, creeds, and other artifacts that were passed from generation to generation. Kappa Alpha was originally founded as Phi Kappa Chi in 1865, at the close of the Civil War, at Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) by James Ward Wood, William Archibald Walsh, and brothers William Nelson Scott and Stanhope McClelland Scott ("Our KA Heritage"). However, "Soon after the founding, the local Virginia Beta chapter of Phi Kappa Psi protested the name 'Phi Kappa Chi', due to the similarity of the names, leading Wood to change the name of the fraternity" ("Kappa Alpha"). Samuel Zenas Ammen is also credited as the fraternity's practical and physical founder; he is given special credit as shaping the organization in the early days. Ammen, as a Master Mason in his hometown lodge in Fincastle, Virginia, was experienced in organized rituals, which helped mold the young fraternity ("Samuel Zenas Ammen"). Furthermore, Ammen, with founder Wood, began to see themselves as an order of Christian

knights, with focus also placed on the practices of the ancient Order of Knights Templar (“Samuel Zenas Ammen”).

This connection to the Order of the Knights Templar solidifies the organization’s Christian roots, as Robert E. Lee was also known as a devout Christian. The fraternity was inspired and influenced by Robert E. Lee,³² who served as the university’s president following the war and was credited as the “spiritual founder” in 1923. Washington College was renamed Washington and Lee following the death of Lee, who is considered “the school’s most illustrious president” (“Our KA Heritage”). Kappa Alpha considers Robert E. Lee the embodiment of what it means to be a “Southern gentleman,” and members therefore not only embrace him as a historical figure but also one of personal significance and heritage. The organization’s popularity is also partly due to its affiliation with the Lexington Triad (also referred to as the Southern Triad)—a group of fraternities with some of the oldest origination dates, in the midst of Southern Reconstruction. Historical roots in white brotherhood form a strong bond among students looking for friendship based on status, gender, and race today. Furthermore, as Historian John M. Coski argues in “Embattled Banner: The True History of the Confederate Flag,” Kappa Alpha itself exists as a sort of Confederate memorial organization.

³² Lee is the “spiritual” founder, meaning the fraternity molds itself after his influence and “spirit.”

Yet, given recent moves of the organization to distance themselves from use of the Confederate battle flag as an official symbol and from the Old South, this section argues such memorialization is incomplete. Rather, iconography itself forms what outsiders might term a locus of resentment; members are less tied to the “timeless memory” of Confederate soldiers, and more interested in the brotherhood the enduring symbols might create. For example, the organization’s self-referential re-enactments of their cloistered and privileged views on what they think the Old South was like represent this white brotherhood revolving around a space based around a few choice symbols, like that of the Confederate battle flag.

Lee’s connection to the flag helps us understand how it made its way into KA iconography. The “Southern Cross,” the design of the Confederate flag we know today, was adopted from General Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia (Bonner). Due to Lee’s inspiration for the fraternity, and his role as founder, both past and current members of Kappa Alpha Order developed an enthusiasm for the Confederate battle flag. The fraternity’s modern-day predilection for the flag no doubt comes from fraternity members’ past use of the flag at Washington and Lee, and the dissemination of use of the battle flag to other Southern Universities. As I discuss from my time at the University of South Carolina, the image of the flag was seen on fraternity t-shirts, flasks, and coolers, with the symbol becoming a sort of “status symbol” of white privilege affiliated with Kappa

Alpha. Again, these items function as a type of modern, inverted form of conspicuous consumption. Although not luxury goods, the t-shirt and coolers represent the power and social status of those that “consume” and wear the items.

The fraternity, in partnership with campuses where its chapters thrive (The University of Mississippi, Louisiana State University, the University of Alabama, and the University of Georgia) served as main forces in re-introducing the flag as a popular symbol within the university culture of the South in the 1940s and 50s, supporting its rise from that time and into the 1960s to statehouse domes and state flags (Cobb). The purpose of this re-introduction within university culture was to gain support for the Dixiecrat party and also to oppose the Civil Rights Movement. The resurgence of the flag during this time period is also strongly tied to the Jim Crow Era, following growing pressures for racial “reform” after World War II in the South (Cobb 232). In “The Confederate Battle Flag in American History and Culture,” Coski highlights that students displayed the flag after delegates returned from the 1948 Dixiecrat Convention at the University of Mississippi, for example (232-233). Georgia made the Confederate battle flag the focal point of their state flag in 1956 (Cobb 233), with state representative Denmark Groover clearly articulating that the flag, “...will serve notice that we intend to uphold what we stood for, will stand for, and will fight for” (qtd. in Edwards). A banner of continued resistance to integration and desegregation, the

flag adopted by Kappa Alpha and universities³³ has served in the formation of white hegemonic Southern discourse through their use of the symbol.

Fraternity culture also brings forward the issue of multi-generational ethnic identification. Unlike more avowed or explicit white supremacist organizations, in which members make a strong ideological choice for entry, plenty of Kappa Alphas join because of their fathers' or grandfathers' legacy in the organization. The Confederate battle flag has been passed from generation to generation as a form of identity, which is paramount within the fraternal framework of Kappa Alpha Order. Herbert J. Gans argues in "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America" that symbols become more important from generation to generation, taking on greater significance as a representation of ethnic identity (1), which is also apparent in groups like Sons of Confederate Veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy. Icons like the flag may mean segregation for one generation, but then need to be carried forward without regard to policy by the next, as an attempt to establish generational loyalty. These superficial attachments are divorced from historical reality, as members rely on antiquated perspectives.

In fact, fraternity members perform disbelief that 80% of African Americans see the flag as primarily a signifier of racial hatred (*PRRI*).

³³ The Confederate battle was unofficially adopted by universities like the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss), appearing on t-shirts and other items. For more on this see the op-ed "I foolishly wore the Confederate flag on an Ole Miss shirt as a youth. I still regret it."

Decontextualized from history and without African American friends or relatives, the “heritage not hate” argument is one that is often put forth by younger generations that support the flag. As Rebecca Watts has also pointed out in *Contemporary Southern Identity: Community through Controversy*, pushback against Southern identity continues to co-create that identity. In this instance, rather than an explicit attack on desegregation, young men are asked to associate themselves with a chain of older men who have been willing to defend the symbol. When the national organization, with a better understanding of the history and contextual logic decides to phase out use of the emblem, members resignify their attachment to this band of brothers, and also attach their frustrations of white erasure. This is the performative enactment of this frustration, as KA chapters exist within the confines of university campuses that at least somewhat embody an encounter with difference. What is significant here is that the national organization of Kappa Alpha, as well as university chapters of the fraternity, can push back on Southern emblems in a way that groups like Sons of Confederate Veterans will not. Kappa Alpha Order exists in a unique space; they border on being a Lost Cause Organization, but do not need to be as expressive or holistic of a group like that of Sons of Confederate Veterans. As a fraternity, the group is privileged to exist within elite academic institutions, allowing them to occupy a somewhat protected environment as students.

Kappa Alpha and Old South Functions

The “Grand” Old South is a nostalgic Southern imaginary that never really existed in the romantic version of *Gone with the Wind*, as McPherson discusses. Events like Old South promote what McPherson terms “lenticular” logic (28), where “the past is partitioned from the present, black from white, old racism from new” (28). The symbolic relevance was primarily to elevate the ideals of a privileged few white Southern elite.

Yet, Kappa Alpha served to continue an invented tradition of Old South balls. Southern universities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century frequently celebrated George Washington’s birthday with balls that depicted life in the antebellum era. Adapted as a KA ritual in 1939 at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, typical balls included period clothing and African American servants, earlier depicted in blackface by fellow students and later replaced by hired African American caterers. For example, at Florida State University (FSU), Bartley articulates the very pointed and intentional hiring of all African American servers at these events; as an enticement to such humiliating work in the 1980s, the Florida State University KA chapter would offer African American students enough compensation for a semester’s tuition. As charity, such wages showed how KAs viewed their position—a graceful remembering of past indignities tied to present paternal “uplift.” If African American students were only to better

themselves, through such humiliation at the hands of white privilege, they could better themselves—directly recalling Jim Crow arguments of white benevolence.

Ralph Ellison's historically based short story about the "Battle Royale" (in *Invisible Man*), demonstrates the cultural humiliation felt by African Americans in this position. The narrator of "Battle Royale" is forced to take part in the battle as entertainment for white men. He is blindfolded and instructed to pummel other African American men until a victor is declared. Following the fight, golden coins are thrown on an electric rug, and the young men are electrocuted as they reach for the coins, much to the amusement and delight of the drunken white men of the town. As Ellison articulates, "...they were all there..." (2), meaning future and current doctors, lawyers, and schoolteachers. In short, all of the so-called "pillars" of the town's white community were present.

Although, in the 2000s, blatant hiring of African American males finally stopped, or at least was made implicit in the form of integrated staff (even as many private catering companies employ African American staff at low wages) until then. Old South balls continued and became more self-referential, with promotional materials and t-shirts recalling Ellison's "they" reference — men of future importance are invited to attend to "Southern tradition." In the end of "Battle Royale," the young narrator is offered a scholarship to an African

American college, furthering the construct of white “social responsibility.”³⁴ As Ellison expressed, social equality only existed in what white men of influence granted. In other words, Old South balls continued to enshrine the meritocracy by which African American caterers could increase their own value by their service to white Southern elite. Women invited to Old South balls were expected to dress in traditional-style Antebellum dresses, complete with lace umbrellas. Southern femininity was to reproduce plantation culture as well, with women as graceful recipients of African American service, even if left unaware of the full logic of its business practice.

Women may also be willing participants that are fully aware yet practicing willful ignorance of what is going on around them. By keeping this tradition alive, these young women were participating in a modern rendering of making certain social relations invisible, especially those dealing with race (McPherson 23). The white Southern lady is always racialized, with her existence predicated on the existence of an African American female slave that made her dress and lifestyle possible. Carr’s speech at the Silent Sam dedication, referenced at the beginning of this chapter, also recalls this racialization. Elaborate female dress of the antebellum period became fetishized at these balls, with young women paying large sums of money to have dresses custom-made, complete with taffeta and

³⁴ During the Jim Crow era, social responsibility was a term used to replace social equality. Social responsibility focused on the importance of races staying separate, yet also functioned as a sort of appeasement for white “guilt.”

hoop skirts. Elizabeth Boyd, author of the forthcoming *Southern Beauty: Race, Ritual, and Memory in the Modern South*, asserts that such dress itself delineates what is described as “choreography of exclusion” (qtd. in Makaris). This choreography of exclusion also relates to conspicuous consumption, as these gowns represent the accumulated wealth of the buyer. Even if freed Black women claimed some of this fashion as their own, as Skye Makaris writes, too little of today’s performances serve that disruption to be legible in the semiotics. “European” wealth signified plantation wealth, especially when fraternity members would sometimes dress in Confederate “greys,”³⁵ paying homage to the uniforms of Confederate soldiers.

Rhetorical Overview

This rhetorical overview of the symbol of the Confederate battle flag augments the continued monologic conversation and also suggests a need for change. The world of the South is “closed down,” especially when considering this world through racially exclusive terms, which is often represented and portrayed in how some whites view the flag. I’ve articulated this view in detail in this chapter, as I discuss how different groups and organizations continue to use the flag. These groups often make the decision to see the flag as a symbol not

³⁵ Confederate greys have been a recent source of appropriation and disruption, in Childish Gambino’s “This is America” music video (Grammy Award, Song of the Year in 2018). Glover views recent ongoing racial events targeting African Americans as a continuation of the Confederate past and dons these pants as a nod to the troubling continuation of racist ideals and nostalgia for the Old South.

representing racial exclusion (Reed), but in doing so they leave out other voices.

Two organizations I have covered in this chapter are heredity organizations —

Sons of Confederate Veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Although labeled as heredity organizations, Sons of Confederate Veterans and

United Daughters of the Confederacy are also purveyors of white semiotics. The

Confederate battle flag is associated with both groups and is still used as a very

public symbol of the Confederacy. The other organization, Kappa Alpha Order,

also exists as a form of heredity organization, as members are more likely to join

if their fathers or grandfathers were members. A member whose father or

grandfather was a member is marked as a “legacy” during recruitment, and they

are more likely to receive a formal “bid.”³⁶

As I transition to Chapter Three, I want to trace my reasoning so far. I discuss the historical reality of the Confederacy, the origins of the Confederate battle flag, and its role as a pervasive symbol. The reality of the Civil War is that it was fought to protect slavery as a way of life, although this is often concealed under the label of States’ Rights. Although different groups try to shroud this through rhetorical means, like clever word choice (for example, calling the Civil War a “revolution”), the reality is that slavery might have continued in the South if the Confederacy had won. Kappa Alpha attaches themselves to an antebellum

³⁶ Recruitment is the process potential members of a fraternity or sorority go through in order to be introduced to all of the Greek houses on a college campus. Potential members indicate their choice for membership, and the Greek houses do the same with the potential members.

worldview, viewing it as a nostalgic time that they want to re-create and mimic through the use of the Confederate flag and social events like the Old South balls and the “Traditions Never Die Week.”

Groups like Sons of Confederate Veterans want to preserve the heritage of legacy of those that fought in the war, yet they also want “future generations [to] understand the motives that animated the Southern Cause” (*Sons of Confederate Veterans*). These motives were the perpetuation of slavery, yet this is not mentioned on the official website of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. United Daughters of the Confederacy is also interested in preserving the heritage and legacy of those that died in the Civil War. However, past actions as an organization led to historical manipulation through controlling the material presented in history textbooks. United Daughters of the Confederacy was also a driving force during the Jim Crow Era, enforcing the “separate but equal” mandate and what Ellison explains as “social responsibility,” which perpetuated racial difference.

These groups practice a type of rhetorical insistence as they dictate how history is remembered and presented. This insistence also becomes self-referential, which is shown in the examples of fraternity members creating t-shirts and other items that they can then showcase to others. As members wear and use these items, they are participating in an inverted form of conspicuous consumption. Identification with the fraternity indicates a level of class and

popularity that others do not have. This practice of rhetorical insistence can also lead to resentment, and what I explain as a rhetoric of resentment. For example, in Kappa Alpha, the resentment begins to form as members are told they can no longer use the Confederate battle flag as a symbol, or when they are told they can no longer participate in social events that mimic the antebellum period. As events like Old South exemplify and enact white semiotics, they occupy a dangerous space.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead to Chapter Three, what happens when resentment goes unchecked? Unchecked resentment can lead to white supremacy. Dylann Roof and the Charlottesville Riots are internationally known examples of this. There are also smaller instances, known on a more local level, like what happened in the small town of Asheboro, North Carolina. As I articulate throughout this dissertation, white supremacy often has a start in Confederate ideology, and this relationship is not waning.

Chapter Three provides a textual analysis of the edited collection *A Fair Hearing: The Alt-Right in the Words of Its Members and Leaders*. Through this analysis, I trace ways that the alt-right is connected to Confederate and neo-Confederate ideology. I also explain the alt-right's connection to other groups, and what they are doing to maintain a strong presence following Charlottesville. Because *A Fair Hearing* came out just after Charlottesville, it is an important

component in my overall investigation into how white supremacy is rhetorically constructed.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BURDEN OF THE BURDEN OF THE PROOF: RHETORICALLY ANALYZING ALT-RIGHT LITERATURE

Higher education—far from being a ‘right’ or a ‘pathway to the middle class’—is only appropriate for a cognitive elite dedicated to truth.

-from the now defunct Twitter account @AltRight.com

Why study texts from the Alternative Right?³⁷ In their Introduction to the symposium on *Rhetoric, Race, and Resentment: Whiteness and the New Days of Rage*, Meta G. Carstarphen and Kathleen G. Welch articulate how “...much scholarly input has explored what goes into the construction of racial pathways of identity” (255). Furthermore, they delineate how “...little of that inquiry has considered the deliberate ways in which rhetoric has been used to foment racial hate and dissension” (255).

An up-to-date example of a text that is being used to augment racism and dissension is *A Fair Hearing: The Alt-Right in the Words of its Members and Leaders*, published by Arktos Media Ltd.³⁸ I chose this text due to its recent publication date of May 8, 2018, following the Charlottesville Riots. Also, *A Fair*

³⁷ See Chapter One for a full definition of the Alternative Right.

³⁸ Arktos Media is a publishing company based out of Budapest, Hungary. They are known for publishing authors of the European New Right. Daniel Friberg, a Swedish businessman and the founder of the company, also has a partnership with Richard Spencer (Owen).

Hearing is the most current edited collection written by those affiliated with the alt-right. The text is a collection of essays written by white, alt-right “activists” and “intellectuals” on what they term “the front lines of a brutal culture war.” They assert that this culture war is taking place now, and that it is against white and European culture. Following the aftermath of Charlottesville, studying the text becomes even more necessary, as membership in hate groups continues to rise.³⁹ I am studying alt-right literature as a way to address the gap identified by Carstarphen and Welch—namely, how is rhetoric used to foment racial hate, dissension, and resentment? Opening an investigation into answering this question is the goal of this chapter.

A Fair Hearing and other books published by Arktos media are readily available on mainstream bookseller's websites like Barnes and Noble, making them easily accessible to the general population.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the alt-right uses Arktos as an attempt to “legitimize” their books academically. Self-publishing has been common for some affiliated with the alt-right—one example is Amazon’s self-publishing service Create Space, which served as a popular platform for many alt-right writers to disseminate their ideology (Smith IV). Now,

³⁹ From data by the Southern Poverty Law Center, membership in hate groups is on the rise.

⁴⁰ However, *A Fair Hearing* has been banned on online retail giant Amazon. This is interesting because Amazon has been under scrutiny for allowing books to “slip through” its radar; for example, at the beginning of February 2020, several news stories emerged of Amazon allowing the sale of anti-Semitic books. One of these books, *The Jewish Hand in the World Wars*, states the following: “If we are to have any hope of minimizing future wars, we must stay the Jewish hand. Jews must be identified, isolated, sanctioned and removed from positions of power” (qtd. in Phillips). Another set of books, translated from German, branded Jews as “the devil.”

the alt-right turns to Arktos when they want to put “an academic imprimatur on racist ideas” (Owen). As Tess Owen explains in “How a Small Budapest Publishing House Is Quietly Fueling Far-Right Extremism,” “Arktos is just one example of the far-right’s attempt to push into the mainstream by repackaging old ideas in language that’s more politically and socially palatable.” One example is Julius Evola,⁴¹ a neofascist Italian ideologue greatly admired by Mussolini (Owen). Arktos continues to translate and publish works by Evola, and he is one of their top sellers (Owen). As the alt-right attempts to reinvent themselves academically, it is important to understand how they are doing this from a rhetorical standpoint. Here is where my work on *A Fair Hearing* enters the conversation.

The Alt-Right and Victimhood

The Rhetoric, Race, and Resentment Symposium’s goal was to understand how racism currently manifests itself, and question rhetoric’s role in racism (255). Carstarphen and Welch remind us “...constructions of race and racism are inextricably tied to structures of power and privilege,”⁴² which become complicated as certain predominantly white groups claim victimhood status.

Michael Ovey, in his article “Victim Chic? The rhetorics of victimhood,” asks his

⁴¹ Evola, a strong supporter of Traditionalism and White Nationalism, also spent time lecturing in Nazi Germany (Sears). Some of his publications include the following: *Three Aspects of the Jewish Problem* (1936), *Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race* (1941), *The Aryan Doctrine of Combat and Victory* (1941), and *The Jews Wanted This War* (1942).

⁴² See Chapter Two for more discussion on the cultural aspects of power and privilege.

audience “What makes a real victim?” (2). Although identifying a “real” anything is always fraught, Ovey answers his own question with the simple response that a “victim is someone’s target” (2). Ovey then expands on the concept of targeting by delineating how “victimhood readily suggests being the undeserved target of another’s actions” (2). He then discusses the implications of “collective innocence and guilt” (2). Collective innocence and guilt are problematic as the terms can refer to an entire nation, or group of people.

This concept has been growing since the economic crisis of 2008, as Anna Szilágyi discusses in her post titled “A Rhetoric of Victimhood,” which analyzes Trump’s 2016 inaugural address. She states how “The representatives of the populist radical right have provided a homogeneously negative picture of the actual state of their countries, blaming it on different groups” (Szilágyi). As Szilágyi claims, “Through portraying their whole national communities as innocent victims of hostile enemies, these politicians present themselves as saviors and popularize their exclusionary rhetoric and policies.” This exclusionary rhetoric allows concepts like White Nationalism to rise. Furthermore, there is the role of power in victimhood. As Ovey asserts, “The power associated with victim-status should not be underestimated. A victim claims to speak with unique authority because he or she has been wronged” (3). This idea of unique authority is important, as it gives victims an implied Ethos to speak on what has happened to them.

The concept of victimhood is complex, as is defining specifically what a victim is, or is not. Victimhood is a political, psychological, and philosophical concept, among other things. For the purpose of this chapter I will use the concept of victimhood where the victim believes that they are or have been a *target*. This feeling of being targeted occurs in different groups I study — poor whites, young men in fraternities, members of Southern heredity organizations like Sons of Confederate Veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy, and individuals and groups affiliated with the alt-right. These groups are also connected through resentment, as they all feel, to varying degrees, that they have been targeted in some way.

One of these groups claiming victimhood status are poor whites, often living in rural areas away from major metropolitan areas. These people often feel they are the target of economic unfairness, with little or no means for upward mobility. One specific example is the state of West Virginia, where in 2017 healthcare providers “...wrote 81.3 opioid prescriptions for every 100 persons” (*NIH: National Institute on Drug Abuse*). Opioid addiction is just one barrier of many that individuals in the Appalachian State face. Poverty has driven this addiction, and as of 2015, West Virginia was the second poorest state in the U.S., next to Mississippi. The victimhood mindset in West Virginia is often articulated by a “nothing can be done to change your lot” mentality of ahistorical white poverty, articulated in works like J.D. Vance’s highly touted *Hillbilly Elegy*.

The state is also over 93% white (*World Population Review*), and overwhelmingly supported Donald Trump in 2016 due to his promise to help revitalize the coal mining industry. Other poor Southern states, like Alabama and Mississippi, face similar issues. Although these groups certainly have racial power and privilege due to race, economically they lack power. Additionally, education is not a priority in many of these states. For example, in West Virginia in 2010, “Only 11.7 percent of the working population [held] a bachelor’s degree...” (Miller). In 2019, that percentage has increased to 20%, which is still much lower than the national average of 32% (*TownCharts*).

As people live in poverty with reduced access to education, it becomes easier for them to identify as a victim. I provide these data not to serve an excuse for any particular group, but rather to provide some context as to why groups from these states might claim victimhood status or be easily persuaded to. These economic and class system barriers are often the cause for struggle, as we know from Marx. This struggle can therefore lead to very real resentment. As people struggle with resentment, they begin to see themselves as a target, as if someone is “out to get them.” A lack of education can also bolster these feelings, as individuals remain unexposed to training in critical thinking and argumentation, skills that might help them overcome this victimhood mentality, or the feeling that “nothing can be done to change your lot.”

Another example of a group harboring resentment is the young men in the fraternity Kappa Alpha Order. As these young men are told certain fraternity practices like the Old South and their use of the Confederate flag have to stop, they feel as if they are being targeted. They don't understand why their fun social events, that have been a tradition of the fraternity for so long, can't continue. They fashion themselves as targets of outside and "liberal" groups that want to change their way of life.⁴³ The League of the South also views themselves as a target by outsiders.

Still, there is more to complicate the idea of resentment rhetoric and how it manifests itself. The alt-right also uses resentment, as they function as a type of "promoter" of resentment rhetoric, gathering followers from across all sorts of different groups and demographics. I am not saying that all economically disenfranchised individuals in West Virginia, or all members of Kappa Alpha are affiliated with the alt-right. However, I do later explicate the strong relationship between League of the South and the alt-right. What I am suggesting is that groups already facing poverty, or groups that feel their heritage or tradition is being forcefully taken away, like Kappa Alpha, might be more likely to fall victim to the type of rhetoric put forth by the alt-right. It is important to differentiate that some groups, like League of the South, have fully crossed the line into full-blown

⁴³ For a detailed history of Kappa Alpha Order, see Chapter Two. For a detailed account of resentment rhetoric, Kappa Alpha Order, and pedagogy, see Chapter Four.

white supremacy. Other groups exist at the threshold, which is why my later ideas on pedagogy are so crucial. I suggest that resentment rhetoric, along with Confederate and neo-Confederate⁴⁴ rhetoric and ideology, both serve as a bridge to white supremacy. Part of the reason the alt-right is gaining traction in their movement is that they are now embracing new groups into their ranks, most notably the League of the South. Additionally, one of the most recognizable and prominently centered symbols within the Charlottesville riots was the Confederate battle flag. The Charlottesville riots are considered a turning point for many members of the alt-right; therefore, it is significant that the battle flag held such a prominent place throughout the duration of the march and the riots.

Defining Resentment

Resentment is a dangerous emotion, due to its ability to reach and impact all different types of people. Moreover, everyone has most likely felt resentment at some point in their life, making it a relatable emotion. Philosopher and Professor of Law Jeffrie G. Murphy suggests in his article “Forgiveness and Resentment,” that resentment is more powerful when one experiences it toward someone that they are very close to. I expand on this, suggesting that resentment is just as powerful when felt toward groups or individuals we don’t

⁴⁴ According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, “Neo-Confederacy is a reactionary, revisionist branch of American white nationalism typified by its predilection for symbols of the Confederate States of America, typically paired with a strong belief in the validity of the failed doctrines of nullification and secession—in the specific context of the antebellum South—that rose to prominence in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.”

know personally. I must also clarify what resentment is *not*, as Marc Angenot's article "The Ideologies of Resentment" investigates. Angenot references Pierre Bourdieu's *Les Règles de l'art*, stating that resentment is not any sort of revolt, or call for social justice (3). Angenot continues his discussion:

Resentment develops mainly in states of society which, by dint of destabilizing its members, of making them feel their incapacity to control the world and its logic, deprive them of reference points, deafen them with falsehoods, confuse collective values, keep alive endemic conflicts, stimulate resentment in each and everyone, urge to discover anaesthetics when confronted by frustration and pain which social disorganization inflicts. (cf. "Resentment Today")

The alt-right knows the impact of resentment, and they use it as a destabilizing force. For instance, *A Fair Hearing* attempts to destabilize its readers through carefully constructed essays designed to keep alive racial conflicts by implementing fear. The solutions to these racial conflicts are often implied violence, eugenics, and the creation of a white ethnostate. Returning to the destabilization of its members, the alt-right has gained followers from very different groups — these groups include incels,⁴⁵ members of the League of the South (and other neo-Confederates), neo-Nazis, conspiracy theorists, and

⁴⁵ Again, incel is a shortened form of "involuntary celibate." Incels are members of varied online communities, where they consistently blame women for their celibacy. Incels often advocate for extreme violence against women, including rape and murder. The Southern Poverty Law Center uses the term "male supremacist" to define incels.

others. Destabilization functions here as a benefit to the alt-right — by “rallying the troops” and gaining followers, they are actually able to stabilize a loose, yet powerful community.

What is significant is that although some of the groups appear to be very different on the surface, resentment is at the core of their ideology and belief system. For example, resentment factors heavily for those involved in the League of the South. Their mission and core values are rooted in their wish for a white, Christian, ethnostate, which is based on resentment stemming from what they see as the “browning” of America and the loss of white power and what they deem as “superior” European culture.

Anxiety about the “browning of America,” and the concern about the eradication of the white race are also prevalent themes throughout *A Fair Hearing*. Furthermore, there is also a strong connection to Eurocentrism, and some essays in the collection support eugenics, although they do so in a couched and guarded way.⁴⁶ Overall, this chapter seeks to trace the connection between selected essays from *A Fair Hearing*, and how they add to the overall rhetorical construction of white supremacy. I also highlight ways that Confederate ideology and a rhetoric of resentment is used throughout selected essays to garner support from varying groups. This use of Confederate ideology is a rhetorical move on the part of the authors, as they want to fully immerse groups

⁴⁶ See my later discussion in this chapter on Ryan Faulk’s essay “The European Revolution.”

like League of the South into the permanent folds of the alt-right. Additionally, Confederate rhetoric serves as an important bridge in the overall rhetorical construction of white supremacy that my research is focused on. I think the alt-right knows this, and they use it to their advantage. Confederate rhetoric, by drawing on history, functions as a sort of cover for resentment rhetoric. Because of Confederate rhetoric's grounding in Southern history, Confederate rhetoric can use terms like "States' Rights" to mask "support for slavery." Support for States' Rights is a palatable and more acceptable way of saying that the South fought to preserve the institution of slavery.

Analyzing A Fair Hearing

I return now to *A Fair Hearing*, drawing attention to two quotes that are found on the back cover of the book. I want to discuss these quotes due to the simple reason that they are located on the back cover, where they can easily be read. Many people, even if they do not read a book in its entirety, might scan the back cover. Therefore, the material placed on back covers is often a rhetorical choice, meant to influence or pique the interest of someone that reads it. The first quote, taken from the Introduction, states the following: "Alt-righters are determined to build a movement that, unlike the mainstream right, can offer meaningful resistance to, and finally rout, the left." This quote, when taken out of context, might appeal to your everyday, mainstream conservative.⁴⁷ If their own

⁴⁷ According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the alt-right rejects mainstream conservatism.

party is unable to stand up against the left, maybe they should join forces with one that can. The other quote, by blogger and political commentator Paul Ramsey, is bold enough to suggest that people of all political leanings should read the book: “I highly recommend this book to people of all political persuasions who want an inside look into the movement and not just the media spin.” Not to be confused with American Christian Ethicist Paul Ramsey, the Paul Ramsey in question is a well-known alt-right speaker and YouTube personality. Ramsey suggests that a “spin” can be put on a group that already employs empty rhetoric—rhetoric far removed from dialogic discourse, or any sort of positive modification through discourse.

In my own research, I expand on Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the dialogic, highlighted in his text *The Dialogic Imagination*. Through continual dialogue with new voices, dialogic exchanges are more focused on positive communication and cooperation, as Sociologist Richard Sennett explains.⁴⁸ Returning to *A Fair Hearing*, the collection’s empty rhetoric⁴⁹ uses logical fallacies to garner support, with sweeping generalization after sweeping generalization pervading the text. The collection also supports eugenics and preys on stereotypes of women, for example stating that women who support liberal ideology are usually childless, blue-haired, “fat,” and miserable. By appealing to fear and stereotypes,

⁴⁸ For more on this, see Sennett on *The Architecture of Cooperation*.

⁴⁹ For more on my discussion of empty rhetoric, see Chapter Two.

individuals teetering on supremacist ideology might be persuaded to take that full leap after reading this collection.

Within the introduction to *A Fair Hearing*, three principles of the alt-right are laid out. These principles are listed as the following: Demography is destiny, The Jewish question is valid, and White genocide is underway (xi-xii). These principles guide the overall direction of the larger edited collection, as each essay attempts to situate itself in a way to appeal to the general population, keep and garner followers through the concept of victimhood, and incite conflict. These principles also tell us, in three short and precise fragments, the guiding ideology of the alt-right. The rhetorical force of the principles lies in their precision — each principle is founded in complex ideology that spans different fields, including history, science, psychology, and more. The alt-right condenses this complex ideology into easy to digest fragments for their followers while also manipulating data and sources to fit their agenda. Moreover, the three principles are strongly connected to victimhood. The first principle, “Demography is Destiny” refers to the idea that population trends determine the future for a specific region or country. In the words of the alt-right, demography is destiny refers to the fear that the white race will be a minority in the near future. Furthermore, by claiming that white culture will be erased, the alt-right implies that whites are targeted, therefore solidifying their placement in a status of victimhood.

This concept is also connected to politics and immigration, as Scott McConnell, a writer for *The American Conservative* discusses in “Is Demography Destiny?”. For example, he states “The more established parties of the European center-right, ineffectual at stemming immigration when in power, increasingly give rhetorical backing to enhanced restriction.” This rhetorical backing suggests that restriction is needed for protective purposes to ensure the safety of whites.

The second principle, “The Jewish question is valid,” gives backing to a long and complicated history of negative attitudes toward the Jewish people.⁵⁰ The Jewish question flips the concept of victimhood, as it places Jewish people in the role of the oppressor. This concept has gained traction among the alt-right, as writer Sam Kestenbaum discusses. His short article, “Among White Nationalists, Catchy New Shorthand for the ‘Jewish Question,’” talks about how the Jewish question is now referred to as the “The J.Q.” (Kestenbaum). In November of 2015, Kestenbaum uncovered the following question on reddit:⁵¹ “Can you still be alt-right without addressing the JQ?” (qtd. in Kestenbaum). One reddit member posted the following reply: “Everyone says the 1%ers control the nation. Well 48% of American billionaires are jews” (qtd. in Kestenbaum). Another reply post read: “The jew question is the root of society’s ills.” “[I]f you ignore the jew question, you ignore the needs of humanity” (qtd. in Kestenbaum).

⁵⁰ From 1860 onward, the phrase “The Jewish Question” was used more and more in antisemitic ways.

⁵¹ Reddit is an online network of communities based on people’s interests.

Although these responses are limited, they place Jewish people in the role of oppressor, suggesting that the rest of society is a target, and therefore a victim. As the one poster stated, if you ignore the Jewish Question, you are ignoring the “needs of humanity,” implying that humanity is somehow suffering as they are victimized by the Jewish population.

The third principle, “White genocide is underway,” clearly plays on the concept of a collective victimhood. Rhetorically, genocide is a powerful term. Upon hearing the term, several examples come to mind—the Native Americans, the Holodomor,⁵² and The Holocaust. There are many more examples as well — the Rwandan genocide, the Bosnian genocide, and the recent genocide against Christians and Yazidis in Iraq and Syria. I give these examples to further stress the rhetorical force and seriousness of the term. As the alt-right claims “white genocide is underway,” they are able to take advantage of the Pathos of the term. By claiming that a large and *deliberate killing* of the white race is already occurring, the alt-right is hoping to gain more followers through their created exigency.

This notion of white genocide also has connections to Chapter Four. When examining the rhetoric of uncovered racist posts I found on the website *Total Frat Move*, several of the posts seem to shadow the fear of this impending

⁵² An intentional famine caused by the Soviet Government in 1933. Ten million people died from starvation, with the majority of the deaths occurring in the Ukraine.

“white genocide.” Although the posts are not directly claiming genocide yet, they do border dangerously on alt-right ideology, as the following post suggests: “30 years from now, all public institutions that bear the name of a white man such will be changed to Martin Luther King or Trayvon Martin. Every elementary school in America will be indistinguishable.” This post, by anonymous user Prex8390, echo sentiments of fear of white erasure, which is directly connected to the alt-right beliefs put forth in *A Fair Hearing*. It also echoes resentment, expressing anger that institutions already named for prominent white men will hypothetically be changed in the future. To this individual, the renaming of buildings represents a loss of power, which I have also witnessed at Clemson University,⁵³ my current institution. Although not a personal loss of power, anxiety still persists in these hypothetical renamings.

The introduction to *A Fair Hearing* also further defines the varied groups within the broader alt-right:

...devotees of obscure Internet cultures such as the “manosphere,”⁵⁴

“human biodiversity”⁵⁵ enthusiasts, “neoreactionaries,”⁵⁶ members of the

⁵³ Other sections of this dissertation discuss how the proposed renaming of buildings at Clemson University has been met with hostility. These buildings include the Strom Thurmond Institute and Tillman Hall. Thurmond was a United States Senator that was staunchly against Civil Rights. Benjamin Tillman, a former governor of South Carolina, was a domestic terrorist and lynching advocate.

⁵⁴ The manosphere refers to the online network for Men’s Rights Activists (MRA) (Cohen).

⁵⁵ Here, “human biodiversity” refers to pseudoscientific racism (Feldman).

⁵⁶ Neoreactionaries “propose a return to old-fashioned gender roles, social order and monarchy” (Finley). They are also resentful toward democracy, feeling that it has run its course.

infamous 4chan⁵⁷ mage board, and pickup artists. And still other elements are comprised of gamers, an older generation of white advocates, paleoconservatives,⁵⁸ conspiracy theorists, and people from a wide variety of backgrounds who have simply been converted. (xiv).

This list is helpful in identifying groups that are affiliated with the alt-right.

Although the groups are varied, several connections exist between them. The first connection, as I previously articulated, is that of resentment. I will go into more detail, as I explain the connection between gamers⁵⁹ and pickup artists.

Both of these groups are known to have a predilection toward misogyny.⁶⁰ What is interesting here is the indirect connection to Eurocentrism and Aryan beliefs, which occurs through what is called “blackpilling.” The black pill “...was popularized on the men’s rights blog Omega Virgin Revolt, where it was first used by commenter Paragon in 2011 (“The Extremist Medicine Cabinet”). Incels that support black pill ideology believe that their situation is hopeless, permanent, and inescapable (“The Extremist Medicine Cabinet”). It is important here to also

⁵⁷ 4chan is an anonymous image-based bulletin board. 4chan is popular with the alt-right and provided strength for Donald Trump’s campaign. For more on this see Mike Wendling’s 2018 book *Alt-Right: From 4Chan to the White House*.

⁵⁸ Dylan Matthews, writing for *Vox*, describes paleoconservatives as those that “...adhere to the normal conservative triad of nationalism, free markets, and moral traditionalism.” However, “...they put greater weight on the nationalist leg of the stool — leading to a more strident form of anti-immigrant politics that often veers into racism, an isolationist foreign policy rather than a hawkish or dovish one, and a deep skepticism of economic globalization that puts them at odds with an important element of the business agenda.”

⁵⁹ Here, I believe that the term “gamers” is in reference to incels.

⁶⁰ *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists*, written by Neil Strauss and originally published in 2005, explores this world in great detail.

define and differentiate between the popular terms “redpill” and “bluepill.” These concepts are often used within the vocabulary of the alt-right.

Harkening back to the 1999 science fiction film *The Matrix*, the concept of the red pill, or red-pilling, refers to being aware of the true nature of reality. The blue pill, or blue-pilling, is then the opposite, which is existing without the truth, in a state of ignorance. Zack Beauchamp, Senior Correspondent for *Vox*, discusses in “Our incel problem” how incels created their own form of the redpill:

The incel “blackpill” takes this even further. Incels believe a man’s sexual success is almost entirely determined by unalterable biological traits: things like his jawline, cheekbones, or eye socket shape. The result, in their view, is that modern Western society is defined by a kind of sexual class system.

Therefore, “In a blackpilled world the sexual marketplace is governed exclusively by genetics” (“The Extremist Medicine Cabinet”). Belief that some genetic traits are better than others, and are preferable, is the basis for eugenics. Support for eugenics and for the preference of “Western” biological traits are peppered throughout *A Fair Hearing*, and especially in the following essays: “Race Realism,” by Jared Taylor, “Irreconcilable Differences,” by Bill Matheson, “The Alt-Right and the Jews,” by Kevin McDonald, and “The European Revolution,” by Ryan Faulk.⁶¹ Connections to this way of thinking are also found in groups like

⁶¹ For brevity, I only discuss “The European Revolution” in this chapter.

League of the South, which is strongly affiliated with the alt-right. League of the South advocates a "...return to 'general European cultural hegemony' in the South (*League of the South*).

This language, focusing on a return to European power and Eurocentrism, also supports Aryan beliefs about what constitutes "preferable" and superior genetic traits. Used as part of Nazi propaganda, eugenics paved the way as a "scientific" reason to strip away the humanity of millions. Moreover, it is important here to delineate that the use of eugenics is not just isolated to the Nazis. As Marouf A. Hasian Jr. explores in *The Rhetoric of Eugenics in Anglo-American Thought*, the rhetoric of eugenics has largely pervaded democratic thought, and has been used to "legitimize many agendas." Now, these agendas include that of the alt-right.

The Last Big Battle of the Civil War

I'll begin my analysis of *A Fair Hearing* with an essay that is directly connected to Confederate ideology. I begin with this essay due to its connection to the Civil War, and because it struck me as one of the more problematic essays in the collection. Also, following Charlottesville, I also found its content to be relevant. "The Last Big Battle of the Civil War," is written by Ethan Edwards. Edwards, in his short biography at the beginning of his essay, describes himself as a "family man and teacher residing in flyover country, watching through a computer screen, from the fleeting tranquility of one of the remaining white

suburban holdouts, as his nation disintegrates” (Edwards qtd. in *A Fair Hearing*). Through his self-identification as a family man and teacher, Edwards attempts to perhaps relate to some of his readers and humanize himself. He asks the following question to his readers: “Why would the Trump presidency and the rise of a populist right in America be related to the American Civil War of 1861-1865?” (76). The essay opens with a tweet from American actor and filmmaker Rob Reiner, which Edwards uses as a lens to frame his essay. The tweet, posted in response to the government shut down in January 2018, read: “Make no mistake, this shutdown boils down to one thing: RACISM. GOP frightened to death about the browning of America. They will lose this last big battle of the Civil War. Diversity is our strength.” (77). Reiner’s tweet draws on the rhetoric of diversity, stating that America is strong because of cultural differences and the many different types of people that call America home. However, this type of thinking is of course at odds with alt-right ideology.

Edwards’ essay is important to my overall argument because of his outright statement that the American Civil War was in fact, fought over slavery and separation. Edwards ignores the commonly used historical guise that the war was fought over “States Rights.” As I have articulated, States’ Rights is often used as a cover to explain why the Civil War was fought. Edwards bypasses this cover by going straight for what he deems as most important — complete separation of races. He ends his essay with the following: “...as with the Civil

War, the ultimate objective must be separation. Mechanically speaking, nothing else works” (86). This is significant because it links Confederate ideology to that of the alt-right and white supremacy. Edwards blatantly states that the Civil War was in fact, about segregation, and keeping the practice of slavery alive. This is probably the only thing that he and I agree on — that the Civil War was fought to enforce slavery, segregation, and white supremacy.

Moreover, Edwards claims that the next battle following the Civil War “...was, naturally, the Civil Rights Movement, in which whites sacrificed their physical spaces, social institutions and racial identities to the equality gods” (78). Claiming that the Civil Rights movement was a continuation of the Civil War is a rhetorical move on Edwards’ part, suggesting that the time was not an era of forward movement and important strides made for equality, but was rather a time where the spaces of whites were taken away. This is not a new rhetorical move, as there are quite a few instances in which actions in the mid-twentieth century (such as the naming of Tillman Hall at Clemson University) were designed to thwart Civil Rights by appealing to Civil War heroes. In terms of physical space and rhetoric, “Rhetoric creates and influences spaces but it is also influenced and created by space,” as Roberta Binkley and Marissa Smith articulate in “Re-Composing Space: Composition’s Rhetorical Geography.” Thinking back to the Jim Crow-era South, resentment rhetoric was used to create and enforce spaces of segregation. In this case, resentment manifested itself in the fact that

the white South was being forced to include African Americans in their communities and day-to-day lives. “Whites Only” signs permeated the landscape of the South, scarring towns with the reminder that whites can do and go as they please, but African American bodies must be under constant policing and surveillance.

As Edwards continues his essay, he progresses his use of unsound logic by claiming that whites have no need for other racial groups, forgetting that much can be learned from cultural exchange. Furthermore, he claims that other racial groups “...objectively, observably, measurably and undeniably diminishes the safety, beauty, cleanliness, cohesiveness, and mechanical functionality of our societies” (85). Statements such as this make his essay difficult to read. However, for those outside of the academy, for those not trained in rhetoric or in the use of logical fallacies, I can understand how language such as this might be persuasive.

Edwards gives no real example of how other racial groups diminish the safety of our society, but in the same breath fails to mention events like the 2017 Las Vegas shooting, where Stephen Paddock, a white male, opened fire on the Route 91 Harvest music festival, killing 58 people and injuring 413. As of January 19, 2019, no motive was found for the deadliest North American mass shooting to date (Romo). Edwards also conveniently leaves out school shootings, and other acts of extreme violence that have been predominantly carried out by white

men. Obviously, it is convenient here for Edwards to not address violence committed by whites, since this does nothing to strengthen his argument. Instead of addressing any counterargument, which is usually required in a formal argument, Edwards just ignores it.

President Trump is also predominantly featured in Edwards' essay. In his section "What is Trump, Really?," Edwards states that "Trump is a conduit, a mascot, a primal roar from white America" (79). Furthermore, Edwards talks about the famous slogan from Trump's campaign: "And it is objectively true that the 'Again' in 'Make America Great Again' is referencing a time when our nation was overwhelmingly and unapologetically white" (79). Here, Edwards claims authority on the subject, which is heightened through his use of the word "objectively." Edwards connects Trump to "white rights," and "white identity" (80). He then negates the severity of white supremacy and fascism, saying that people who "sputter" on about these beliefs "...forget who built the modern world, and whose societies and systems nonwhites want to either emulate or ensconce themselves in" (80). There is no reference to other cultures that have contributed to the modern world.

For example, Edwards ignores the large impact that the Islamic empire had on Western Europe, particularly in the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages, the Islamic Empire was more advanced than Medieval Europe — Western Europe gained much from Islamic culture, learning, and architecture. Math, science,

medicine, and astronomy were all heavily influenced by Muslim ideas, but Edwards does not include any of this. One significant example that Edwards leaves out is that the first hospital in Paris was built after Louis IX returned from Crusade in 1260 (“The Islamic World in the Middle Ages”).

Edwards ends his essay by defining what he calls “the leftist dream, the promise of a someday colorblind, gender-blind, multicultural utopia” (83). He states that this dream is “dead and starting to smell” (83). “Nobody told us, as has become evident over the last 10 years or so, that we would be required to watch our culture and history pulled apart by hyenas,” he states. His hyena metaphor dehumanizes the Other, and his violent and vivid imagery of being “pulled apart” suggests that “our” culture will be eaten, consumed, and destroyed. Furthermore, the reference to hyenas is calculated, due to hyenas coming from Africa. Through this polemic on diversity and multiculturalism, Edwards is directly calling for conflict. This returns to the previous definition of resentment—keeping alive conflicts for the overall purpose of chaos. Moreover, this call for chaos is what occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia, at the Unite the Right Rally. This brings me to the next essay, which was written following the events that took place in Charlottesville.

Ground Zero at Charlottesville and League of the South

Evan McLaren’s essay, “Ground Zero at Charlottesville,” attempts to explore the events (from his perspective) that happened from August 11 to 12,

2017. McLaren, Executive Director of the National Policy Institute,⁶² dismisses the deaths and violence that occurred that day, never acknowledging that these deaths were unnecessary and were a direct result of the demonstrations that were planned. As McLaren states, “Three people died in Charlottesville that day—two of them, in uniform, the other a civilian counter-demonstrator stricken, either by a Dodge Challenger or her own failing heart, or perhaps both in a quick succession” (41). Here, McLaren shifts blame for the deaths, attempting to diminish their significance. He also never stated that the deaths were preventable. Additionally, he claims that the event pitted the alt-right against what he terms “radical leftists and corrupt authorities” (40). The essay reads more as a self-aggrandizing memoir, as Edwards recalls being maced and eventually handcuffed by plastic zip-ties (50). Seeing himself and others like Richard Spencer as martyrs, he recalls their collective shock when they heard Republican Senator Ted Cruz’s statement that they should be “investigated as domestic terrorists” (51). This is perhaps the only thing Cruz and I have ever agreed on.

McLaren also instantly calls attention to the Confederate battle flag as he talks about “the battle flag of the Army of Northern Virginia” and its presence among the other flags⁶³ and symbols present at the riots.⁶⁴ This essay is

⁶² The National Policy Institute is an organization headed by white supremacist Richard Spencer.

⁶³ Other flags present include the Thin Blue Line Flag, a pro-police flag formed as part of the Blue Lives Matter Movement. This movement was formed in response to the Black Lives Matter Movement.

⁶⁴ For a full analysis of symbols and groups present, see “Flags and Other Symbols Used By Far-Right Groups in Charlottesville,” published by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

paramount to investigate due to its connection to Confederate symbolism and ideology, which McLaren makes a point to include. McLaren also suggests that the alt-right could benefit from a relationship with what he calls the “alt-lite” (44). Associated with figures like Gavin McInnes, founder of the group Proud Boys, and Jack Posobiec, a well-known internet troll and conspiracy theorist, the alt-lite typically tries and has tried to distance itself from the “racial and identitarian mentality of the alt-right” (44).⁶⁵ However, McLaren states that the two groups are still aligned in some ways. This alignment returns to the concept of resentment. The alt-lite exists in a rhetorical space similarly aligned with the alt-right, but not fully existing in the same realm of racial extremism. The alt-lite’s use of resentment is connected to the type of resentment rhetoric I explore in other chapters of this dissertation — primarily within Chapter Four as I examine the examples from members of fraternity Kappa Alpha Order, publicly posted on the website *Total Frat Move*. As I articulate, resentment rhetoric serves as a connection, as a bridge, to white supremacist ideology. Thus, the construction of white supremacy can be traced rhetorically, especially through this connection.

⁶⁵ In 2018, I am assuming after this collection was published, Gavin McInnes publicly quit “Proud Boys,” the far-right group he co-founded. Previously, he claimed that the group was like a “gang” of men that shared similar beliefs, primarily those of being “pro-men” and “pro-Trump.” However, when the FBI found that Proud Boys did have ties to white nationalists, McInnes distanced himself from the group.

A Brief Background of the Alt-Lite

Resentment rhetoric, among groups of young white men, is important to contextualize. Why are alt-lite figures like Gavin McInnes and Jack Posobiec popular, and what caused their popularity? How are figures like this connected to resentment rhetoric and my overall argument? Although I have clarified that McInnes recently quit Proud Boys, the group he helped to form, he was credited as being a force in the violence that occurred after a Metropolitan Republican meeting in October 2018. Furthermore, the Southern Poverty Law Center classified the Proud Boys as a “general hate group,” and this information is still found on the Center’s interactive hate map, with Proud Boys factions found in states such as Tennessee, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky.

In 2003, McInnes stated the following: “I love being white and I think it's something to be very proud of. I don't want our culture diluted. We need to close the borders now and let everyone assimilate to a Western, white, English-speaking way of life” (qtd. in Grigoriadis). This troubling rhetoric of wanting to protect “white culture” can again be seen in the fraternity posts I analyze in Chapter Four. Young men are taught that this white erasure is happening, and that it’s happening now. This anxiety then manifests itself in resentment. Resentment then turns into white supremacy and hate. McInnes, an educated,⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Ironically, McInnes was a former Women’s Studies major.

former co-founder⁶⁷ and writer for “hipster”⁶⁸ outlet Vice News, was the perfect example of a spokesperson for young men to identify with and turn to, as he unapologetically promoted masculinity and chauvinistic ideology. Furthermore, McInnes endorsed Trump in 2016, which helped him gain popularity among young, white male Republican voters.

However, returning to McLaren’s essay, it is interesting that he does distance the alt-right from the ideology of McInnes and Posobiec. In his mind, being “alt-lite” is not enough. Rhetorically, what does this accomplish? McLaren writes:

If the right was not going to be united in Charlottesville along an alt-right/alt-lite axis but still would be united, then this unity would have to extend from the alt-right in the *other* direction—to groups like the League of the South, the Traditionalist Worker Party, American Vanguard, and Patriot Front. (45)

It’s interesting to see this demarcation in the *other* direction. Who are these other groups that McLaren makes reference to? Vanguard America (VA), previously known as American Vanguard, “is a white supremacist group that opposes multiculturalism and believes America should be an exclusively white nation” (“Vanguard America”). Their manifesto, as of 2018, states the following:

⁶⁷ McInnis co-founded Vice News with Shane Smith and Suroosh Alvi in 1994.

⁶⁸ Hipster, according to the Oxford dictionary, is a person who follows the latest trends and fashions, especially those regarded as being outside the cultural mainstream.

The racial stock of this nation was created for white Christian Anglo/Europeans by white Christian Anglo/Europeans. All other ethnicities, races, religions and demographics are absolutely not compatible with this nation's original culture. With such being stated, a mass exodus, isolation, apartheid, segregation and/or separation must be implemented to retain the good order and longevity of the country.” (qtd. in “Vanguard America”)

Again, we see the connection to Christianity, whiteness, and Eurocentrism. Membership in VA is typically male, but they do have a women's division. But, like many groups affiliated with the alt-right, women serve traditional roles within the domestic sphere. A tweet from VA in June 2017 reinforces this ideology: “The woman has her own battlefield. With every child that she brings into the world, she fights her battle for the nation. Strong nations grow from strong families. Vanguard America Women's Division” (qtd. in Vanguard America”). Women's role in these groups is to make sure the white race continues to reproduce.

Patriot Front, another group mentioned by McLaren, broke off from VA after the events in Charlottesville. The group “focuses on theatrical rhetoric and activism that can be easily distributed as propaganda for its chapters across the country” (“Patriot Front”). At a demonstration at the University of Texas at Austin on November 3, 2017, the current leader of Patriot Front, Thomas Rousseau, is credited as saying the following:

America our nation stands before an existential threat. The lives of your children, and your children's children, and your prosperity beyond that, dangle above a den of vipers. A corrupt rootless, global, and tyrannical elite has usurped your democracy and turned it into a weapon, first to enslave and then to replace you. (qtd. in "Patriot Front")

Rousseau employs fear as a rhetorical device, as we again see the reference to whites being enslaved and then finally erased. This rhetoric was also echoed in Charlottesville, as those participating in the rally shouted, "We will not be replaced!" Adjectives like "rootless" and "tyrannical" also pepper Rousseau's speech, and the "den of vipers" metaphor produces powerful imagery. I am particularly interested in Patriot Front's use of "garish patriotism" ("Patriot Front"), and I have plans to address this form of rhetoric in future projects. Their use of theatrical rhetoric seems to resonate with younger individuals ("Patriot Front") and this is something I would like to investigate.

The Traditionalist Worker Party, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, "is a neo-Nazi group that advocates for racially pure nations and communities and blames Jews for many of the world's problems" ("Traditionalist Worker Party"). Matthew Heimbach, founder of the Traditionalist Youth Network, said the following in 2016: "The plan of mass purging citizens would be insane to implement but perhaps one that might cross the mind of an economist or elite politician looking at the balance books and realizing that multicultural America is

headed down the path of the Roman Empire” (qtd. in “Traditionalist Worker Party”). Here, we see another reference to ancient Rome—as I have articulated, white supremacists often use references to Greece and Rome to further their nationalist agendas. Heimbach, with Matthew Parrott, co-founded the Traditionalist Youth Network (TYN) in 2013 (“Traditionalist Worker Party”). They were interested in a return to traditional values, “...including the central claim that nations should be racially and culturally homogenous” (“Traditionalist Worker Party”).

In 2015, Heimbach and Parrott created the Traditionalist Worker Party (TWP) as the “political wing of the TYN” (“Traditionalist Worker Party”). Heimbach’s interest in tradition can be traced back to Julius Evola, the Italian neo-Fascist I reference at the beginning of this chapter. Thinking about how tradition relates to this dissertation, the TWP “defines traditions as ‘positive cultural interactions that have existed over a long period of time’” (“Traditionalist Worker Party”). Furthermore, the TWP espouses “those traditions have existed for a long time, because they work. They have formed European-American mores” (“Traditionalist Worker Party”). Again, here is a focus on white, Eurocentric customs and conventions, as well as a fixation on tradition. Heimbach also has connections to League of the South, as he took on the role of training director for the organization in 2015 (“Matthew Heimbach”).

As a group, the main goal of League of the South is to establish a Christian theocratic state. This state would also “politically dominate black people and other minorities” (“League of the South”). When the League of the South was founded, the group included Southern university professors, but as the group became explicitly more racist in their ideology, most professors left the organization (“League of the South”). It seems at first the group was shrouded under the guise of a historical organization, concerning itself with Southern history, as well as with Celtic Culture (“League of the South”). The connection to Celtic Culture is explored in the “unofficial” text of the organization, *Cracker Culture* (“League of the South”). Grady McWhiney, throughout *Cracker Culture*, discusses ways that he sees the culture of the South as being very different from that of the North. The controversial book covers cultural differences and uses the term “Cracker” to delineate culture, rather than an economic condition. McWhiney suggests that Northerners and Southerners are very different, and that these differences are to blame for the Civil War. By specifically framing the conflict as cultural, the South can then be heralded as a place that needs protection from those that are trying to erase its culture.

Why would McLaren and the other members of the alt-right want to bend their alliances here? They obviously want to gain more members, but there are other implicit connections as well. How might a group like League of the South, which began as an alleged historical society, strengthen the agenda of the alt-

right? Some answers can be found in the following statement made by Michael Hill, the current president of League of the South:

The Browning of America, and my native South, was not something to which I assented, and I surely do not approve of it. It is not what my ancestors intended for me to inherit. But truly I have only myself to blame for this tragic fate. While it was happening I did not do enough to stop it. Now, my children and grandchildren may have to pay the price that will come from being a hated white minority in a majority non-white land. And non-Christian, too, I might add, so I don't expect any mercy will be shown them.

So whatever time the Lord of Hosts – whom I gladly will serve with all my heart, mind, and strength – may allot for me from here to the end, I pledge to spend fighting to restore the South as White Man's Land. I do this because I believe the admonition in 1 Timothy 5:8. 'But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' (KJV) So, in direct contradiction to the politically correct dictates of the current day, I pledge to be a white supremacist, a racist, an anti-Semite, a homophobe, a xenophobe, an Islamophobe, and any other sort of 'phobe' that benefits my people, so help me God!"

This statement, taken from a longer post, titled “My Pledge of Allegiance,” was originally posted on League of the South’s website on August 18, 2016, five months and one day before Trump and Pence’s formal election by the Electoral College on December 19, 2016. Looking at the wording, we again see reference to “The Browning of America,” which is the same type of anxiety found in the examples of resentment rhetoric discussed and analyzed in Chapter 4.

Moreover, McLaren’s past as a former British history professor is interesting here, due to his position at Stillman College, a historically black college (“League of the South”). Hill’s resentment is traced to his belief that whites one day will be a “hated minority,” and that his children and grandchildren will one day be shown “no mercy.”

The rest of his archived allegiance is also worthy of rhetorical analysis. Hill ends his allegiance with making sure that the South is saved “for our dear Progeny” (*League of the South*). This idea of needing to save the South hearkens back to Lost Cause rhetoric, with the very specific example of the South needing to be saved for future generations. This focus on traditional family and continuation of future generations is similar to the rhetoric espoused by other groups affiliated with the alt-right.

The European Revolution

More connections between the beliefs and ideology of the League of the South and the alt-right can be found in Ryan Faulk’s essay, titled “The European

Revolution.” Faulk’s brief biography claims that he is a “...pioneer in online discussions of the science of race,” although I do not see any “credentials” listed that would validate this (162). The introduction claims that Faulk’s essay tackles “...the cultural Marxist lie that any racial group can create and maintain European civilization” (162). This is in line with the beliefs of League of the South, echoing a calling for a white ethnostate.

Faulk’s first section, “The Collapse in Homicide,” uses preselected evidence, stating “The data show that Northwestern Europeans of past centuries were, depending on the specific time and place, roughly 10 to 20 times more likely to commit a homicide than are modern Western Europeans (164),” a statistic pulled from *The 10,000 Year Explosion: How Civilization Accelerated Human Evolution*. *The 10,000 Year Explosion*, a controversial book written by Henry Cosad Harpending⁶⁹ and Gregory Cochran, both university professors, attempts to explain how natural selection continues to be an active force. Faulk uses the previous statistic to then look at race in the United States, claiming how “By comparison, blacks are only about 7.5 times more likely to commit homicide than whites are” (164). What is especially dangerous about Faulk’s essay are his ideas on “criminal genes,” which are explained more fully in “The War on Murder,” a section where he discusses criminality and getting rid of “criminal

⁶⁹ Harpending died in 2016. He was an American anthropologist and distinguished professor at the University of Utah. Cochran is an American anthropologist and author.

genes” (166-67). To support this, Faulk quotes an example from Harpending and Peter Frost, in which they discuss that in Catholic Europe “...from around 1000 AD to 1750 AD, about 1.5 percent of the male population was executed for some sort of crime, either by court or by mob” (166).

Faulk continues, stating how “over 30 generations, this adds up to 45 percent of the males, or just 22.5 percent of the population” (166). His faulty and terrifying logic concerning ethnic cleansing is apparent throughout the essay, and especially within the following quote:

This is an important point. It is not merely that those criminal individuals got removed. It is that their genes got removed out of the collective genetic tumbler. And so it is not merely that a few bad apples got removed each generation, but that those genes then couldn’t spread throughout the rest of the population. Each criminal can thus be seen as a vessel in which a cluster of more criminal genes is contained. And so when executed, those genes got removed throughout. And each generation, there would be fewer and fewer hard criminals popping into existence, because there are fewer genes within the whole of the population, and so it becomes less and less likely that an individual will get a “criminal draw” from the tumbler. (166)

Continuing in this line of dangerous rhetoric, Faulk states the following: “Most people who are criminally inclined do not end up committing murder, but they are

probably more likely to get in a fight, get drunk, steal, be promiscuous, etc.” (167).

Moreover, Faulk makes assumptions about race and intellect by proclaiming, “And they are less likely to be abstract thinkers or very entrepreneurial or intellectually-oriented” (167). Here, we see a direct connection to supremacy and intelligence, as Faulk claims that only certain groups are capable of forming businesses or taking part in entrepreneurial enterprises. As Faulk claims, “A genetic change— in effect, a eugenics program — replaced the majority of the Western European population at least twice, possibly three times” (170). To Faulk, these changes were for the positive, and they eventually led to what he terms as the “first world” (173).

Faulk then shifts into a discussion of First Worldism, a problematic term encompassing supremacist and Aryan beliefs: “As [Faulk] use[s] the term, First Worldism refers to the idea that Western social systems and standards are not the product of mere politics or ideas, but are by-products of high averages of certain inherited traits in Western populations” (170). For those not versed in the dangers of eugenics, they might be easily manipulated by Faulk’s statements, taking them at face value. Faulk continues, suggesting the following:

Other peoples — the Oriental Caucasians, Indians, East Asians — only broke out of serfdom and the medieval economy when the Europeans either did it for them, or, as in the case of Japan, when they witnessed

Europe and rapidly emulated the final outcomes of the agricultural and industrial revolution. (171)

Here, we see a bold reference to the Other—along with Faulk’s assertion that these groups were “saved” by “white Europeans,” furthering the idea of Eurocentrism, which is also promoted by League of the South. Focusing on white power, Faulk states “If anyone should have racial pride, it is Europeans, the more northern and western the more so” (173). Here, we see even more nods to Eurocentrism, with reference to explicit Aryan beliefs. Faulk ends his essay with the following:

And when you understand what this thing is we call “modern civilization,” the totally new and revolutionary conception of property, of law, and of life itself that preceded it, the hidebound, primitive economies it replaced, and the genetic changes in Europe from which it came—then you have a visceral understanding, in an instant, of how this, our genetic inheritance, is absolutely it. (173)

The term “genetic inheritance” is a loaded and problematic one; by using inheritance Faulk makes a rhetorical choice to frame genetics as almost a monetary-type gain given by ancestors. Faulk frames it this way, as something that needs to be protected. Again, for those unversed in eugenics, statements such as this can gain rhetorical force, influencing individuals in ways they never thought possible.

Metapolitics and White Supremacy

Daniel Friberg,⁷⁰ in his essay “Metapolitics,” states how “Donald Trump has driven the most pernicious neoconservative elements from the Republican party and awakened an implicitly racial, nationalist sentiment in the American right” (178). Whether or not Trump personally supports these views, what is concerning is the young men in fraternities, discussed in Chapters Two and Four, that might be easily swayed by this form of rhetoric. At my current institution, Clemson, I began graduate school the same year as the 2016 election. Trump flags seemed to be the norm at fraternities, although the intentions behind the flags remains unclear. As I discuss, many elements of fraternal life in the South dictate class, status, and manliness. Voting Republican and in this case supporting Trump seem to be one of these. These young men want to identify with the “group.” If they did have opposing viewpoints, it might be difficult to express them.

However, through this identification, young men find themselves entrenched in a precarious culture. My intention is to not demonize or “call out,” these students. However, it is important to define and analyze the culture and discourse communities that they are associating with. Additionally, it is not just young men in fraternities that might be swayed by this rhetoric. As Friberg

⁷⁰ The same Friberg discussed earlier in this chapter. He is the founding editor of Arktos Media, Ltd. and is a founding member of Swedish metapolitical think-tank Motpol.

explicates in his essay, the alt-right hopes to gain a variety of new members through their version of metapolitics.

But what is metapolitics and why is it an important concept to my argument? Alain Badiou, in *Metapolitics*, theorizes that politics today is not “the political,” a sentiment also echoed by his translator, Jason Barker, in his introduction to the book. As Barker delineates, “...Badiou sets out from the premise that the State...instead of being all-embracing or totalitarian, is in fact something akin to a representative fiction, albeit a constitutive one” (vii). Metapolitics is very different from political philosophy: “Metapolitics retains the direct action of politics in thought, and thus prevents the philosopher from interfering in a situation that can do without his exalted commentary (Barker qtd. in Badiou). Furthermore, “The point is not to interpret the world, but to change it.” It seems that Friberg is drawing on this notion but doing so in a way to advance the agenda of the alt-right. Metapolitics, in its simple definition, is talk about politics itself, which seems to be the overall angle that Friberg is working.

As Friberg discusses the strategy of the alt-right, their approach becomes apparent. They “engage in metapolitical warfare through memes, podcasts, blogs, books, alternative media outlets, ‘trolling,’ and real-world activism” (179). These approaches echo Badiou but are taken out of context. For example, there is the alt-right’s “real-world activism” and Badiou’s support of the leftist demonstrations in France in 1968, which are now simply referred to as May 68.

How successful has the alt-right been in this approach? Friberg doesn't say, and due to the alt-right's large and varied internet presence it is hard to get a realistic count as to how many people are members of or identify with the far-reaching group.

However, the alt-right has been successful in creating a sort of "parallel internet," a concept discussed by *New York Times* writer Kevin Roose. In his article "The Alt-Right Created a Parallel Internet. It's an Unholy Mess," Roose describes how the alt-right has attempted to create their own digital services. He explains that they have faced obstacles, but it is important to remember that as technology changes those affiliated with the alt-right will adapt, perhaps finding new ways around what they see as censorship.

How Friberg discusses power is also problematic: "We must learn from history not only how to attain power and influence, but more importantly, what power actually is, where it is situated, and how it is shaped" (179). Friberg skips over so much here, leaving out sources and evidence of a scholarly past and present that has defined and described power and its function. It seems elementary at best that Friberg can even mention power without a nod to Foucault, especially in acknowledging Foucault's assertion that power can be set against itself. Friberg continues his discussion of power in the section, "From Metapolitics to Power." Friberg claims that the "method is to influence the masses and, of equal or greater importance, to influence those who influence the

masses, i.e., public figures of all kinds” (180). Friberg states “A typical example of the former is the moderate right-winger or libertarian who regularly sees alt-right memes on social media, and at a certain point finds himself chuckling or nodding in agreement with one or another image and/or message” (181).

He continues: “Through a process of relentless idea-seeding by alt-righters, this person has slowly softened to our views (which are, after all, Truth, albeit forbidden Truth)” (181). Again, we see a reference to the “red pill” of truth. Through a bombardment of ideology, their point has been made. Then, “The day finally arrives when this person, just out of curiosity, listens to one of our multitude of podcasts, and from there the conversion is quickly consummated” (181). Interesting here is Friberg’s strong belief in the persuasive power of the alt-right’s podcasts, and in word choice —by using the word “consummation,” he evokes religion, and the action of making a marriage or relationship “real.”

Friberg claims that through alt-right ideology, followers are able to reclaim personal power: “This person is given the moral permission and the intellectual tools to advocate for his racial interests, and by this process becomes an influencer himself” (181). For those that might view themselves as victims, this reclamation of power is important. They can regain what they feel was taken from them, and they no longer have to be a target. Additionally, the use of “influencer” is also a rhetorical choice. The word influencer brings about ideas of social media fashion, beauty, or athletic influencers, garnering followers, views, and likes

through reviews, beauty tutorials, and workouts. The type of influencer Friberg describes is similar, with the end result being overall the same: you want to attract followers to your “brand.” In Friberg’s case, the brand is white supremacy and the alt-right. Here, he is repackaging metapolitics in an easy-to-understand metaphor, as he is attempting to garner support from younger individuals.

In conclusion, Friberg states: “The ultimate goal of our metapolitics is to set an authentic right in motion, a force that is growing in strength through our own alternative media channels, as well as through gaps in the establishment’s censored channels” (182). Friberg thinks that once the alt-right’s version of metapolitics reaches the masses, “The force will take on a life of its own, broadening public discourse in a revolutionary manner and paving the way for a renaissance among European peoples” (182). Whether or not the alt-right’s version of metapolitics will continue to grow in the way that Friberg suggests, at least we are now equipped with a better rhetorical understanding of it.

Looking Forward

Ultimately, I read *A Fair Hearing* many times for this chapter. It was difficult to read due to the blatant hate speech, faulty logic, and sweeping generalizations. However, as rhetoricians, teachers, communicators, writers, and activists, we must be armed with an understanding of the alt-right, the varied groups that make up the alt-right, and the type of rhetoric they employ. Overall, the edited collection left me with many questions centered on ethics, morality,

and human nature. Although we know from other events in human history that humans have the ability, time and time again, to dehumanize and strip the Other of their very being, I wonder how far the alt-right would and will go. Charlottesville is one poignant example to learn from. We know from Charlottesville that the possibility for violence is very real, and that this violence has already occurred. For this chapter, I chose four essays from the collection for analysis. The four essays I chose — “Ground Zero at Charlottesville,” by Evan McLaren, “The Last Big Battle of the Civil War,” by Ethan Edwards, “The European Revolution,” by Ryan Faulk, and “Metapolitics,” by Daniel Friberg, were chosen due to their relevancy to my overall argument. *A Fair Hearing* was broken into five segments: “The Alt-Right in Context,” “Personal Perspectives,” “Culture Clash,” “The Human Question,” and “Counterrevolution.” I chose one essay from each section to present a holistic view of the alt-right at this moment in time. I wanted to articulate who their leaders and writers are, and what they are thinking. However, I wanted to contextualize the alt-right in my own words, so I did not include an essay from the section “The Alt-Right in Context.”

I end Chapter Three with a reflection on the documentary *White Right: Meeting the Enemy*. In filmmaker Deeya Khan’s documentary, Khan confronts those that espouse hate, even towards her. As Khan attempts to uncover why people are driven to extreme and hateful ideology, she traveled to Charlottesville to document the Unite the Right rally/Charlottesville riots discussed in this

chapter. Khan interviewed Richard Spencer, a leading figure of the alt-right. Spencer's attitudes and beliefs did not change over the course of their conversation, but others did. After meeting and talking with Khan, Brian Culpepper contacted her via Skype to announce he was stepping down from the National Socialist Movement, a white nationalist organization. His time spent with Khan caused Culpepper to change his mind and reconsider his actions toward others. Their interaction resulted in a positive change, suggesting that identification and productive discourse can occur. Of course, there is always the concern that people act differently for the camera, but Culpepper contacted Khan after filming had ceased, on his own time, and through his own efforts. Khan states "We all have the capacity to effect change." I end with this quote not to promote unachievable idealism, but rather to suggest that rhetoric, especially in politically turbulent times, has the ability to impart change and discourse.

This also hints at Chapter Five, where I discuss rhetorical outliers. Through my discussion of rhetorical outliers, I discuss the concept of the community rhetor and how community rhetors, through participatory critical rhetoric, can impart change from the ground up. Many of these community rhetors are former white supremacists that have left the extremist lifestyle behind. After reading *A Fair Hearing*, I knew I had to dedicate a chapter to the other side

of hate. Chapter Four begins to set this up, as I discuss ways that pedagogy functions to combat resentment frozen loci.⁷¹

⁷¹ Stagnated ideas and ideology that can be fractured and eventually dismantled.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEW DIALOGIC PEDAGOGY: FRACTURING AND LIQUIFYING THE FROZEN LOCI OF RESENTMENT RHETORIC

If the structure does not permit dialogue the structure must be changed.

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future.

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Chapter Four is centered on specific examples of “resentment rhetoric” that call for pedagogical intervention. I define resentment rhetoric as rhetoric used by a group traditionally in power, specifically employed when members of the group, or the group as a whole, are confronted with changing beliefs that might question what has been historically supported. For this chapter, the group I investigate is Kappa Alpha Order; as a popular, white, fraternity, they usually occupy a space of privilege and power within the environment of a university. As I discuss in Chapters Two and Three, tradition is paramount to groups in the South, and has been used as a means to consistently shut down conversation or discourse of any kind. Groups in the South, like Kappa Alpha, promote their own kind of discourse, which becomes circular and self-referential.

The examples of resentment rhetoric I put forth in this chapter, gathered from past and current members of Kappa Alpha fraternity on the website *Total Frat Move*, highlight the exigency of the type of pedagogy that I am calling for, which is what I term New Dialogism, or New Dialogic Pedagogy. Previously, in Chapter Two of this dissertation, I discuss the detailed history of Kappa Alpha fraternity and the role that the fraternity has played in shaping the American South. I investigate the organization's significance in the South, analyzing the cultural impact of the fraternal organization in both the university setting and beyond.

Moreover, I begin to explore what I call "frozen loci" — stagnated ideas and ideology that can be fractured and eventually dismantled through pedagogical practices such as Krista Ratcliffe's notion of rhetorical listening and what Margaret J. Wheatley describes as a "willingness to be disturbed." In addition to Ratcliffe and Wheatley, I also employ theory from Eric King Watts, Mikhail Bakhtin, Emmanuel Lévinas, and others. I pull from the theory of Watts and his article "'Voice' and 'voicelessness'" in rhetorical studies" — he states that "if 'voice' is to be meaningful to rhetorical studies it has to be capable of salvaging the *communal* features of discourse" (192). Furthermore, Watts reminds us of the following: "'voice' is not detachable from a body" (192), which is central to my own research on New Dialogic pedagogy. Voice must *always* be credited to the speaker. Watts reworks many of Bakhtin's theories, and I do as

well. Drawing from Bakhtin's theory of the Dialogic, found in *The Dialogic Imagination*, I reimagine how the Dialogic might function in a classroom among other theorists and pedagogical tools. Lévinas is key here as well, as students will begin to understand the importance of ethics and how we might be responsible for one another. Using these varied scholars in tandem provides a unique way to combat resentment rhetoric and frozen loci.

The examples of frozen loci I provide in this chapter are responses found on the website *Total Frat Move*; these responses function as resentment rhetoric put forth by past and present members of the Kappa Alpha fraternity. The responses in question were posted after official sanctioning of the fraternity's Old South balls, a popular social event I introduce and discuss in Chapter Two. These responses warrant an academic response. An analysis of the responses uncovers troubling ideology, as those affiliated with the fraternity feel comfortable expressing blatant racism. Although these comments occur online and under the shrouded guise of usernames, this does not take away from their shock or impact. In short, they present a rhetorical situation in need of positive modification. This smaller rhetorical situation mirrors a much larger one, as pockets of resentment rhetoric can be found not only in the American South, but country-wide and even globally. This is very important to note, as it highlights how this rhetoric moves from its place of origin in the South to other states not in the original Confederacy, like California.

Again, this chapter explores specific pedagogical practices and how to implement them within the classroom and beyond; the goal of this pedagogy is to fracture this frozen loci and resentment rhetoric through what I term New Dialogism.⁷² My goal is that this pedagogy, when implemented within university classrooms, will reshape how students view concepts like tradition. Furthermore, students can be given the tools to reconsider how symbols, like the Confederate battle flag, work to inform their idea of tradition in powerful hegemonic ways.

I begin this section explaining official correspondence from Kappa Alpha's Executive Director, Larry Stanton Wiese. Wiese's official correspondence was in relation to the sanctioning of the fraternity's continuation of the previously mentioned Old South balls (in Chapter Two) and was sent out in an email to the Kappa Alpha Advisory Council, all Active Chapters, Alumni Chapters, Commissions, Chief Alumnus, and Former Knight Commanders (Regester). This email was also included in an article posted on *Total Frat Move*, a website catering to young, mostly white, men in fraternities across the country. A visit to the site's homepage uncovers what one might expect on a digital platform dedicated to all things "frat." The website's homepage currently features the tag line "COLLEGE IS CRAZY," with a space to "submit your best photos and

⁷² Parts of this dissertation chapter are adapted from my book chapter "Old South Reckoning: The Case of Kappa Alpha's Old South Balls," part of the edited collection *Reconstructing the South: Critical Regionalism and Southern Rhetoric*, to be published by the University of Memphis Press.

videos.” Current photos include a game of beer chess and a young man passed out, presumably from a night of drinking, with sharpie markings on his face.

There is also a section titled “TFM Girls,” where “the hottest college girls in the country” are “featured” daily. In addition to these sections, one can also find blog posts and short articles concerning different facets of fraternity life. After searching for news about the fraternity and the discontinuation of Old South balls, I came across posted resentment responses lamenting this official sanctioning by the Executive Office. These responses, although somewhat limited, highlight very specific examples of frozen loci.

Additionally, these responses indicate an internal backlash against KA’s national office that will likely never be seen by the broader public, due to *Total Frat Move*’s targeted audience of young, collegiate males. Unless one was specifically searching for this topic or was in the “know” about this website or fraternities in general, these responses would remain mostly hidden to the general public. Pantomiming “states’ rights” rhetoric, students and fraternity members disliked the notion of being “forced” to move “forward” by a more general authority — the Executive branch of their organization. In the article I uncovered on *Total Frat Move* — “KA Nationals Ban Chapters From Using Traditional “Old South” Themed Formal,” Dan Regester explains how the particular tradition of Old South was invented. As Regester explains, “The Kappa Alpha Order started the Old South Ball tradition in 1939 at Mercer University. It

was inspired by the release of the classic film *Gone With the Wind* and served as a celebration of the fraternity's southern roots" (Regerter). Regerter, a graduate of the University of Central Florida, was involved with fraternity life as a member of Phi Gamma Delta, which is also known colloquially as "Fiji." Phi Gamma Delta was recently in the news in January of 2019, when a member drugged and raped two University of Tennessee female students in his fraternity house (Kast). To "apologize," the young man texted the two victims, saying he was "sorry" for what he did to them.

Although my goal is not to demonize all fraternities, it is important here to delineate that fraternities can foster dangerous groupthink, promoting racism, misogyny, and in some cases, violence. Regerter, as a former member of Greek Life, uses an insider tone when discussing the tradition of Old South:

Girls get fucking STOKED to get all dolled up in those brightly colored, ridiculously large Victorian dresses with hoop skirts, giant floppy Southern belle hats, and — for the overachievers — those useless lace umbrellas that serve virtually no purpose other than to look more regal. Seriously, they love it.

He continues throughout the post to flip his tone between informative reporting and insider racism and sexism, as he discusses the dangerous groupthink of Southern heritage I mention before: "Overall, it's a typical formal weekend to commemorate KA's principles of courtesy, graciousness, and open hospitality.

So essentially a weekend where you get blown while wearing a paisley ascot and top hat.” Complementing KA’s national office for ending the reprehensible practice which was a “really shitty time period for a certain group of people” (referring to African Americans), Regester ironically calls on KAs to “squeeze in all your antebellum fetishes” and ends the article by commenting on all the people who “get offended about get offended [sic] over anything related to your organization.” It’s hard to tell where Regester stands on the issue, but the most significant aspect of the article is the comments section.

Reading the Forum

Fortunately for analysis, Regester’s writing opens up a space for more unfiltered, anonymous commentary in this online space. Of the 50 comments, the ones that appear to come from KA members themselves (with “we/our” prepositions or self-identification) are the following:

Dan Regester-edsexoffender: Wow, next they are gonna change our spiritual founder from Robert E. Lee to Martin Luther King

ColonelRebForever: Just another example of the fleecing of the South. The liberals are hard at work to turn our nation inside out. The fight isn’t coming—it’s here now.

Prex8390: [sic] 30 years from now, all public institutions that bear the name of a white man such will be changed to Martin Luther King or Trayvon Martin. Every elementary school in America will indistinguishable

MarkDaniels: Problem number one is KA having our Executive Council meeting in San Francisco.

TM1215: I am a KA alum and fuck those fucking pussies in VA that have fallen to their knees and swallow Obama's brown load. Every chapter should print the largest "LONG LIVE OLD South" banner possible and fly it from airplanes until January 18.

Captain_Decatur1865: Next we'll be giving bids to women and having Tupperware parties.

RustyFlask123: They said you couldn't have Old South but they never said you couldn't have a plantation/slave owner themed party. Loopholes.

VanillaBeanFrat: Should I stop wearing cotton?

Supertank156: I'm a KA alum...I'm going to throw a huge "old South" party here in Louisiana. All of you fuckers are invited! Fuck this BS!

(And in response to a self-identified African American women who says "KA is actually irrelevant anyways[;] there are many other fraternities that actually have values.") Supertank156: KA does have values! sorry we are pissed Blacks can be racist and whites can't even be proud of our heritage. And I'm not talking about slavery. Maybe you should sign up for TFM-SWAC and leave us be.

Three main arguments I have termed "frozen loci" of argument run through these statements. By frozen loci, I specifically mean stagnated ideas and ideology, many of which have originated in the South due to the South's complicated past with slavery, Jim Crow, the nadir of race relations, and the false idea that the United States now functions as a "post-racial" society. However, it is significant to note that elements of these frozen loci in the South are also present in other geographic regions as well, with the current political climate augmenting these ways of thinking.

First and most clearly, what I found in these responses, is that the fear of a majority non-white America (sometimes referred to as majority-minority) runs throughout. Names of the spiritual founders or sacred institutions like beloved schools named for a white man will be changed to Civil Rights leaders or victims of racist violence (King and Martin) are examples. Second, an imagined liberal or northern antagonist is to blame for “making trouble,” as nostalgic, racist traditions are assumed normal and any opponents are breaching a sacred covenant. As the “ColonelRebForever” put it, the “fight” is “here now.” Third and related, the fault lies with those outside the KA community claiming change is necessary. For example, a self-identified African American woman is asked to leave the forum and join one better suited to her identity. Her attempt to engage in discourse is immediately shut down; this highlights my earlier statement that tradition is typically used as a powerful defense against engaging with change or what members of the group deem a threat to their dominant ideology.

Additionally, the Kappa Alpha chapters not located in the South have shifted the momentum. “San Francisco” hosting KA’s Executive Council meeting means liberalizing or queering a “safe” white-heterosexual normalcy. Even something as innocuous as San Francisco acting as a host city for national meetings causes anxiety here, as members are protective of what they deem a “Southern” and all male organization. Continuing on the theme of gender and reflecting the lawsuits against Virginia Military Institute and The Citadel that

forced all-male state-supported colleges to accept women, the men worry that the national office will soon mandate women join and institute “Tupperware parties.” Overall, we find resentment functioning throughout these examples as members perceive threats being made against their “protected” way of life.

To move these frozen loci into the present, fraternity members argue for appeasement strategies: still hosting “plantation/slave owner” themed parties but change the name, throw “Old South” parties without the official sanction of the KA national office, or (ironically) stop wearing cotton so as to avoid “being racist.” Strategies like this, whose primary goal is protection of Southern iconography and ideology, have no clear policy referent or explicit need, but serve to reinforce generational and fraternal connection with insiders. And, if it were not already clear from the above, to uphold and normalize the white supremacy of its members. One alumnus, free of the institutional scrutiny of a university goes the furthest, to say that the change symbolizes a national office that has “fallen to their knees [to] swallow Obama’s brown load.” Another alumnus feigns apology that the fraternity is “pissed Blacks can be racist and whites can’t even be proud of our heritage.” Perhaps the most seemingly innocent of the comments, “Should I stop wearing cotton?” highlights the broader implications at work here. Cotton is obviously a staple of most clothing, but what is troubling here is the refusal to acknowledge cotton’s role in the American South and its connection to slavery.

These examples of resentment represent frozen loci. Resentment here is defined as anger that the members' way of life has been interrupted — they can no longer hold Old South balls. Members do not see the harm in what they see as an innocuous social function. However, the members' longing for their iconography and white brotherhood are not the same as arguments of League of the South, Sons of Confederate Veterans, or United Daughters of the Confederacy. Note that none of the responses attempt to articulate white supremacist principles (often identified as "Southern principles") themselves, nor are they really engaging with the historical record of memory, in order to argue for the meaning of significance of the Lost Cause. Although it is a limited sample, we can contrast the above self-identified insider statements with another commenter on the same *Total Frat Move* story of Kappa Alpha's decision, who clearly has read the pseudo-historical texts of the above Lost Cause groups. His lengthy reply reads:

TossMeABronson: If the Confederacy was about maintaining white supremacy, why did the 5 civilized tribes (The Nations) not only ally with The South, but send many to fight wearing Confederate uniforms? Interestingly enough, the last Confederate General to surrender was a Cherokee Indian named Stand Watie. Also, why did thousands of Tejanos join the Confederate Army, many serving in Hood's Brigade, and many serving as officers? Or how about the

Hispanics from Spanish colonies including Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Mexicans (estimated upwards of 10,000) who came to the South to fight for The Confederacy? I Also, let's not forget that the only reason Lincoln emancipated slaves in the rebellious states (slavery was still legal in 5 Federally controlled states and territories) was to insure the Confederacy would not get support from staunchly anti slavery Britain and France. Such support could have changed the outcome, or at least lengthened the war. Lincoln himself said his primary objective was to preserve The Union, not fight to end slavery. And General US Grant, the so-called Great Emancipator, was a slave supervisor and owner. I The fact is less than 10% of Southerners even owned slaves. With that in mind, saying the War for Southern Independence was fought for slavery is the same level of stupidity as saying anyone who enlisted after 9/11 fought for Halliburton.

Loaded with false equivalencies and inverted power hierarchies, the commenter has clearly absorbed many Lost Cause mythologies that are still perpetuated today. The use of Lost Cause mythology and rhetoric also plays into the theme of victimhood; underwriting and supporting a "victim" mentality allows for greater

ideological control. This is especially true for hate groups, and how hate groups gather and keep members.⁷³

The field of rhetorical studies has long been interested in correcting the historical record; in this case, we might be better off with the full Lost Cause mythologist in our classroom. After all, the latter commenter has at least an interest in historical reasoning.⁷⁴ However, these situations do provide a chance for pedagogy strategies to combat frozen loci. First, this stunted resentment-reasoning suffers from two limitations: little exposure to historical or contextual reasoning, and a lack of engagement with difference. Our classrooms and the texts we assign are a perfect opportunity for students to engage with difference; one way to do this is through exposure to new ways of knowing, making, and doing through the New Dialogic, which I explain in the next section of this chapter.

Further, in the case of Kappa Alpha, there are more powerful forces at work. Because my specific plans to produce an ethnography of Kappa Alpha at my current institution (Clemson University) were prohibited by both the director of Greek Life and the National Executive Director of Kappa Alpha (the aforementioned Larry Stanton Wiese never returned the numerous emails I sent to him), I am curious about the legitimacy of Kappa Alpha wanting to seriously

⁷³ This is explained in my analysis of *A Fair Hearing: The Alt-Right in the Words of Its Members and Leaders*

⁷⁴ I thank Brandon Inabinet for this connection to rhetorical studies and the historical record.

commit to racial understanding or healing. If new ways of thinking have really been enacted by the sanctioning of Old South balls, why not allow members to inquire about how the meaning and symbolism of the flag has shifted or changed from past practice?

And yet even from those records and public comments, we can see the rhetoric of Kappa Alpha enough to devise an anti-racist pedagogy, based on the frozen loci of its members. These examples of resentment rhetoric provide recent proof of why what I term New Dialogic Pedagogy is so important within the university classroom. As I define this in the following section, one must also think about the role that tradition and heritage play for certain students. Heritage and tradition are usually used as a totalizing means to shut down anti-racist and progressive conversation, which is largely due to the hegemonic power of groups, like Kappa Alpha and Sons of Confederate Veterans, supporting tradition within the South. A common example is the “Heritage not Hate” iteration of the Confederate battle flag, which has been flown consistently in response to claims that the flag is a racist symbol.

New Dialogism: An Anti-Racist Pedagogy

In this paragraph I situate the concept of New Dialogism within a theoretical foundation of putting different voices in conversation. Dialogism, as defined and explained by Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination*, is first explicated in terms of literature and literary study. For example, Bakhtin explains

that dialogic works of literature are in a continual dialogue with other authors and texts. In other words, these texts do not exist singularly. Although originally grounded in the study of literature, the theory of dialogism is not just confined to this field. Studying Bakhtin's work on dialogism illuminates his belief that language *itself* (emphasis mine) should be dialogic. This view of language allows for rich interpretation within the field of rhetoric, especially when considering how certain ideological beliefs sustain what I term "frozen loci." It is paramount to note here that within a dialogic process, as opposed to a dialectic⁷⁵ process, changes in ideology can occur. I rely on Bakhtin as a frame to set up my own unique ideas on dialogic equality and how this informs my definition of New Dialogism.

Although Bakhtin is sometimes criticized as being too "canonical," this view of his potential shortcoming for contemporary arguments should be reconsidered. Pam Morris, in *The Bakhtin Reader*, articulates the wide scope of Bakhtin's work with the following: "His ideas are being utilized not just in literary studies but also in philosophy, semiotics, cultural studies, anthropology, feminist and post-colonial studies, Marxism, ethics and, of course, Russian and Slavic studies" (1). Bakhtin's versatility must be noted here. His work being used in fields as diverse as feminist and post-colonial studies should speak to the inclusivity of his ideas and theory. I too, am adding to this inclusivity by bringing

⁷⁵ A dialectic process, as proposed by Hegel, allows for little change within ideology. As highlighted in Plato's *Republic*, one solution or idea establishes hierarchy over the others. My use of the dialogic attempts to invert these power dynamics that have allowed for certain beliefs to be in power for so long.

his work into pedagogy addressing resentment rhetoric, and bringing his work into conversation with other scholars, including contemporary scholars of color.

Additionally, it is also important to note here Bakhtin's disability and background. Bakhtin did not inhabit a space of privilege; this differentiates him from other male "canonical" philosophers and scholars. Following an investigation by the Soviet secret police, he was sentenced to hard labor, but because of health reasons was exiled to Kazakhstan (Hirschkop and Shepherd 168). He also lost his leg in 1938 due to a rare bone disease; overall, the illness forced him to become an invalid. Furthermore, Bakhtin's work was not known in the West until after his death. The hardships Bakhtin endured should place him outside the scope of more "hierarchical" white male scholars that are often criticized for being cited too much.

Thinking about Bakhtin's original definition of the dialogic, I develop a method of pedagogy in combination with Wheatley's notion of disturbance in the classroom. Later, in this chapter, I further explain this connection between these two ideas, also drawing on other scholars like Watts and Lévinas that can facilitate New Dialogic ways of thinking within the classroom. By placing Bakhtin with contemporary scholars of color like Watts, students will begin to experience the New Dialogic in action. Watts's research into public voice, and his specific research into African American public voice and how this relates to representation of black bodies and the way that communities are formed and

shaped, augments and builds on dialogic theory already put into place by Bakhtin. As Watts articulates in his article “*Voice*” and “*Voicelessness*” in *Rhetorical Studies*, “‘voice’ is the enunciation and the acknowledgment of the obligations and anxieties of living in community with others” (180). Bakhtinian scholar Michael Holquist echoes this notion of community. In his book *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, Holquist states that “[s]ince Bakhtin places so much emphasis on otherness...community plays an enormous role in his thought” (37). Relation between the self and the other in the community is done through dialogue; within the classroom community a focus on Watts’s notion of voice must exist alongside dialogue.

This acknowledgment of obligations and anxieties is important, especially due to Watts’s emphasis on living with *others*. This might be especially helpful for students who believe the role of tradition shuts down conversation with those that disagree with them. For students entrenched in insular ideology, they have been taught that they don’t have to answer to those questioning their tradition (e.g., support of the Confederate battle flag or support for Confederate monuments). Additionally, many communities in the South are still separated by race; this is a result of lingering effects due to past forced segregation in the Jim Crow era. Many students have never really listened to the other side. Later, I will discuss how assigning short pieces from the journal *Callaloo*, in conjunction with the original resentment rhetoric examples discussed earlier, can assist in using

tradition as a means to open conversation with others, rather than shut it down. This exercise opens up communication between difference in the classroom. By bolstering that which has been under-represented, a New Dialogism occurs where voices historically shut down are given their place in the classroom, alongside voices that have traditionally held power in the South and beyond.

I shift here for a moment to again situate myself within my research and why this matters to me. One reason I do this is to interject the dialogic in my own writing. I find that events in my life have informed my rhetorical research, prodding me to investigate why people do what they do and support what they support, to speak colloquially. As a graduate student, my affiliation moved from the University of South Carolina to Clemson University, where a plantation house still exists on campus, and campus buildings continue to bear the names of Benjamin Tillman and Strom Thurmond. Additionally, Clemson has a student body with less than 7% identifying as Black or African American, which is problematic for a state where the African American population is around 28% in 2019 (“Clemson Demographics & Diversity”). Increased need for diversity is not only apparent in the student body, but also among faculty, as Clemson’s faculty remains predominantly white and male. For example, the 2019 Clemson University Interactive Factbook shows that 35 tenure and tenure-track faculty were Black or African American, 32 Hispanic, 155 Asian, and 740 white.

Kappa Alpha exists and thrives as part of this broader culture within American universities, and not just at schools within the South. Although schools in the South are challenged to improve numerically on factors of race, this is not a uniquely Southern problem. To highlight this, the newest *U.S. News & World Report* national rankings on campus ethnic diversity highlights other problematic geographic regions. For example, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln currently stands at a 0.3 diversity index, Iowa State University at a 0.29, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison at a 0.33 (“Campus Ethnic Diversity: National Universities”).

Moreover, statistics from schools in other regions of the country show that diversity is a national problem. Kappa Alpha exists nationally, and as I discuss frozen loci and other forms of resentment rhetoric certainly exist country wide. However, on a Southern campus like Clemson’s there are specific remnants of a troubling past. Like the previously mentioned Strom Thurmond Institute and Tillman Hall, the past is still at the forefront, rearing its ugly head in ways that are institutionally supported.⁷⁶

Returning to the importance of dialogism, the concept allows the past to be in communication with the present and future. To paraphrase the political theorist Robinson, a Bakhtinian practice emphasizes that it is not enough to

⁷⁶ An Altusserian analysis of ways that resentment rhetoric is supported by universities is included in Chapter Two.

simply understand the other's perspective. Only if something is made other than itself by being seen from outside can it produce something new or enriching. In short, this means that the other perspective is offered. This other perspective is vital for arguments surrounding that of the Confederate battle flag. Dialogic discourse might assist in bringing important marginalized counter-narratives to the forefront and allow for greater and more widespread engagement with these counter-narratives, at least from a scholarly and pedagogical standpoint.

Kappa Alpha's iconography and white resentment discourse fit perfectly with what Robinson calls monologic discourse. Such discourse is made up of objects, "integrated through a single consciousness" (Robinson). Other people, including African Americans, may have their own values or icons, but the monologic perspective reduces those people to the status of objects. They are not "recognized as 'another consciousness' or as having rights" (Robinson). To pull from the comments made under Regester's article on *Total Frat Move*, an African American woman can have her own sorority, her own icons of sisterhood, and should not bother white men on a forum...as long as white men are able to continue their legacies of privilege uninterrupted. Monologism pretends to have the "ultimate word," Robinson says, by disavowing a world of meaningful others. Embracing the meaningful other is what can hopefully occur within the classroom.

Community-Based Approaches

In my own setting and beyond, aiming for more community-based approaches within general education and writing classrooms seems of prime importance. This approach might be especially helpful within the context of first-year composition classrooms not just at Southern universities, but at colleges and universities throughout the country. While it is unhelpful to bring up the specific acts of one campus group (targeting only certain students in the classroom as “the racists”), it makes a turn to broader institutional rhetorics of race even more important, especially as students are just learning the central iconography they will identify with for life.

I return momentarily to my current institution to provide some specific examples of pedagogical intervention. At Clemson University, those that have tried to rename Tillman Hall (called Old Main first and later renamed for lynching-advocate Ben Tillman) have been met with hostility. Tillman was a former governor of South Carolina and was a key figure in the creation and development of Clemson University; but, the nature of his legacy, as a domestic terrorist, should be made clear. One mode to enact this confrontation of the past is through the investigation of “questioning tradition” as a conversation starter and opening for positive change and modification through discourse. As Holquist states, “Discourse does not reflect a situation, it *is* a situation” (63). Discourse, as a situation, will be a powerful pedagogical tool. At Clemson, tradition and

heritage are explicitly connected to Tillman, the same man who stated, “Blacks must remain subordinate or be exterminated.” A.D. Carson begins his article “My South Carolina university is whitewashing its complex racial history,” with this very same quote from Tillman.

As a PhD student at Clemson, Carson started the “See the Stripes” Campaign to urge administrators to stop “whitewashing” the school’s history. Carson, now Assistant Professor of Hip Hop and the Global South at the University of Virginia, fought to raise awareness of how racism is embedded deep in Clemson’s history. And yet, Clemson has chosen to keep the name, with markers of context, to mark its “unpleasant stones,” as Clemson Board chairman called Tillman.⁷⁷ Despite the context of Tillman’s racism, Tillman Hall is continually emblazoned on much of Clemson’s merchandise, including diploma frames, t-shirts, Christmas ornaments, and other commodities. Furthermore, the Tillman clocktower is a focal point of the campus. Tillman Hall exists synonymously with tradition at Clemson, and the campus is built around this central point. I return to these examples because I know other universities are also built on symbols of racist tradition. And, tradition is obviously not just

⁶ Clemson Board chairman David Wilkins made the following response to the 2015 decision to keep Tillman Hall’s name intact: “Every great institution is built by imperfect craftsmen. Stone by stone they add to the foundation so that over many, many generations, we get a variety of stones. And so it is with Clemson. Some of our historical stones are rough and even unpleasant to look at. But they are ours and denying them as part of our history does not make them any less so. For that reason, we will not change the name of our historical buildings. Part of knowledge is to know and understand history so you learn from it. Clemson is a strong, diverse university in which all of us can be proud. That is today and tomorrow’s reality and that is where all our energy is focused.”

connected to universities. Tradition is and has been consistently used as a means to justify all sorts of beliefs, ideas, and practices.⁷⁸

Questioning tradition usually shuts down conversation, but certain texts may help keep that space of discussion open. Rasha Diab, Thomas Ferrel, Beth Godbee, and Neil Simpkins stress in their article “Making Commitments to Racial Justice Actionable,” in the larger edited collection *Performing Antiracist Pedagogy in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication*, the importance of what Wheatley terms the pedagogical “disturbance” (26). Wheatley’s *Turning to one another: Simple conversations to restore hope for the future* not only addresses the disturbance, but also highlights ways tasks like listening can be put into action. Disturbance, here, is defined simply as a way of thinking one might not be used to. Part of this disturbance is also allowing for confusion and being comfortable with letting go of certainty (Wheatley 34). As Diab et al. suggest, “[w]illingness to listen and to be disturbed makes us develop ways to resist how these micro manifestations of aggressions and inequities recycle their ever-present historical legacies” (25).

Thinking about the previous examples of resentment rhetoric posted on *Total Frat Move*, those responses are perfect examples of the recycling of these legacies. The content of the posts, referencing cotton and plantation/slave owner

⁷⁸ This argument can be traced back to Edmund Burke and more recently, Roger Scruton. Things like prejudice and group loyalty can be enforced if the end means, or goal, is shrouded by tradition from those participating.

themed parties, reflect horrific historical legacies of the past, recycled in new ways to reflect the current time period, including online comments and modern fraternity parties.

Wheatley, evoking Friere's thoughts on vocation, ends her book with prompts, which all promote different ways thinking and listening. Wheatley's trust in the disturbance is what I am seeking, especially through dialogic discourse promoting the bolstering of historically marginalized voices surrounding racist symbols, like that of the Confederate battle flag. This type of dialogue can also assist in understanding why social events like Old South are problematic, and why and how they make those not part of the majority feel uncomfortable. It is usually better when students bring up these student-group-specific examples, so that course instructors and professors do not risk creating non-listening audiences from the outset. However, in the case of the comments on *Total Frat Move*, I feel that these could be introduced by the instructor, but only after trust and community building have been established in the classroom. As Heather Bastian reminds us in "Student Affective Responses to 'Bringing the Funk' in the First-Year Writing Classroom," it is often the goal of writing educators to "disrupt academic convention" (6).

Bastian calls on Adam Banks's 2015 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) address, where he reminds us that "...comfort and tradition typically define these spaces..." (6). By "spaces," Banks is referring to

classrooms, departments, and institutions. We are reminded again of the power of tradition, and how its presence and impact is ubiquitous, even in the space of what many consider a liberal institution of learning. Wheatley's concept of the pedagogical disturbance can work here to positively transform these "traditional" spaces, allowing for students to experience trust in the classroom while also working through material or concepts that won't always be comfortable.

At Clemson University, this notion of the disturbance is already visible. Rhondra Robinson Thomas leads the "Call My Name" project on campus, documenting and sharing the stories of African Americans who contributed to the development of Clemson University from 1825 to the present. Part of the "Call My Name" project involves a tour of Clemson, highlighting and sharing the role of African Americans in Clemson's development. The tour presents a dialogic encounter, allowing students and others the ability to experience a history which has been ignored and overlooked: convict-lease Black labor brutally robbed to build key academic buildings, Black service communities left in disease-ridden and inadequate housing, musicians and "outsiders" who began to break down this racial hierarchy, and finally Harvey Gantt and the desegregators who altered this history.

These kinds of institution-wide educational programs add to an overall positive exchange by setting up a positive and successful pedagogical disturbance that impacts all students; Professor Thomas has been careful not to

end her narrative in the sad mistreatment of her ancestors as she continues her investigation into the present.

A Positive Disturbance

Abel Bartley also enacts this form of disturbance discourse in the courses he teaches at Clemson University. He equates wearing or promoting the Confederate battle flag to that of wearing the emblem or mascot of your favorite sports teams. As an African American professor of History, he tells his students what the flag means to him. To Bartley, the flag is a racist symbol. His speaking evokes the notion of Lévinasian ethics; or, the “right to tell” and the “obligation to listen” (qtd. in Diab et al. 31). Bartley has the “right to tell” his students his position, and they, therefore, have an “obligation to listen.” Using the emblems and mascots of sports teams as an easy-to-understand mode of identification, Bartley informs his students if he sees them wearing or promoting a shirt, jersey, jacket, or hat of a team, that they must identify with or support that team.

With Clemson as a top-ten ranked football program currently, this metaphor also offers a strong point of identification to see why partially ironic or casual displays of racism are still racist acts. This is especially important at Clemson, where students in another fraternity (Sigma Alpha Epsilon) went viral in mocking African American culture in “Cripmas” Parties, posing in front of Confederate battle flags, wearing Black urban outfits, and yelling racist chants.

What is significant here is the openness and honesty with which Bartley engages his students; rather than ignoring what might be an awkward or uncomfortable situation for some, Bartley goes right in for the disturbance. Many of the white students entrenched in a “heritage-versus-hate” understanding of the Confederate battle flag often only hear and are exposed to one group’s feelings and attitudes towards the flag. This group is usually the dominant group adhering to tradition without question, offering no other understanding of the meaning and rhetorical force of the flag. From the feeling of being misunderstood, these groups might act out in language and gestures operating as frozen loci of racism-without-substance. White students “get the joke” of a Cripmas Party, wherein their built resentments toward a culture of what they see as “political correctness” or “oppressive” oversight gets fought against in acts of pure racial antipathy. This, of course, exudes irony because many have never talked to, nor listened to the African Americans (especially elderly ones) or historians who can explain the “hate” made real in this dichotomy.

Stressing again the importance of the “disturbance” within the classroom, there is the “need to appreciate, to challenge, and to be willingly disturbed” (Diab et al. 32). Bartley does just this. By challenging the often held “heritage versus hate” ideology, Bartley causes a disturbance in his students. Through this disturbance, he initially gains the students’ attention by using a startling pedagogical tool — this helps to ensure that students will be engaged from the

very beginning. Although a “disturbance” often carries a negative or problematic connotation, in this case the disturbance focuses on the positive expression of identity through jerseys. The obligation to listen, as expressed by Lévinas, is then placed on the student. By using the metaphor of the jerseys as a mode of identification, Bartley is able to create a common ground with his students. In her book *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*, Krista Ratcliffe defines rhetorical listening as a “stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture” (17). Students will engage with listening as an opportunity, not a faculty member’s forced or close-minded drive toward a goal of anti-racist advocacy.

Of course, a more customary but not insignificant way to practice dialogic pedagogy is to find the voices of traditionally underrepresented groups in literature, offered as assignments in a space like the first-year writing classroom. A short piece titled “What’s the Confederate Flag Got to Do With it?” by writer Tina McElroy Ansa in *Callaloo*, begins with her personal identification: “I’m one of those Black folks who identifies herself, along with African American, female, author, womanist, and feminist, as ‘Southerner’” (5). McElroy Ansa adds a personal narrative to the ongoing conversation surrounding the flag — she hails from Georgia, another state located within the Deep South and the former Confederacy. As a Georgian, McElroy Ansa alerts her reader that she is aware of the history of the region; she states the following: “A Georgian does not even

have to travel one state up to see the image of the Confederacy emblazoned on the state flag. The Georgia flag also bears that image (5). In short, the flag has been a staple within her surrounding environment. McElroy Ansa closes her narrative informing her audience of her refusal to let the racist image of the flag control her or influence her in any way (6).

It is significant that McElroy Ansa reminds her audience that she is still a Georgian and connects with her home-state on a very personal level. McElroy Ansa's narrative reflects her voice; the reader is able to aptly realize her views on the Confederate flag, as she does state the flag's racist connotation and the racist meaning of the flag to her. Like Bartley, she has the "right to tell" in relation to her own views on the symbol. This right to tell, as expressed by these individuals, might be impactful for white students that have never been exposed to dialogic pedagogy.

Furthermore, McElroy Ansa takes on an important and often contested topic — how to have Southern pride and identity when this identity is so connected to the Confederate flag. McElroy Ansa discusses part of her identity as a Southerner, articulating her own current role in the tradition of the South. She too, has Southern heritage. As students read articles like Ansa's, they can begin to question the validity of "tradition" being used as a device to perpetuate "hate," from the viewpoint of others. When this "right to tell" notion of discourse is utilized in a classroom, students can be shown ways to discern frozen loci like

emblem arguments differently through an acknowledgment and eventual understanding of these differing narratives.

Of course, professors must be careful as they employ a right to tell pedagogy so that it does not become flipped. Students must understand that the right to tell is a tool reserved for groups that have had their voices historically taken from them and silenced — the right to tell uplifts these voices that have been marginalized by bringing them into the open.

Elizabeth Spencer's "Some Notes on the Confederate Flag," also published in *Callaloo*, is a brief piece that discusses her stance on the flag as specific to historical contexts. Spencer believes the flag "...should be kept in those historical contexts where it belongs" (168) but should never be employed in connection to opposition to racial integration or white supremacist organizations, like the Ku Klux Klan (168). For most scholars, any "redemption" of the flag by seizing it in a "think piece" from hate groups or policies that disadvantage African Americans is short-sighted at best and disingenuous at worst.

However, the flag does represent an important "holdout" in many white students' imaginations—and thus should be a voice in the conversation. In "For Which it Stands," Mae Henderson begins her piece with the following quote from an undergraduate student at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: "Tradition does not make [the Confederate flag] right or necessary." Henderson blends personal experience and narrative in her interpretation of Southern

tradition surrounding the flag. Henderson returns to Stanley Fish's term "interpretive communities" (89), acknowledging that "...they/we read the icon of the confederate flag according to their/our history, background, personal education, and training" (89). She concludes that, "...the confederate flag, and the confederacy for which it stands, imagines a community--whether past, present, or future--as a community whose citizens--dead, living, and unborn--are defined not by their region so much as by their racialized 'whiteness'"(90).

Advancing this position, she states that the flag creates an "imagined community," where rights and privilege rely on both "racial exclusion and privilege" (90). Finally, she places the flag in relation to other symbols of the South, including "...confederate icons, memorials, and memorabilia" (90), suggesting that the real meaning (racial exclusion and white privilege) of these objects is hidden under the guise of history. By reading these texts by McElroy Ansa, Spencer, Henderson, and others, students will gain new perspectives on tradition and history from voices that have been largely left out of the conversation. What they do with this information is up to them, but with engaging dialogue and focus on ethics, new ways of knowing, making, and doing might emerge. In terms of pedagogy, this can open doors for community building, while also providing an environment for themes focusing on social justice and equity to enter into the space of learning.

Furthermore, in the article, “The Confederate Battle Flag,” another piece from *Callaloo*, Guy Davenport considers the flag in relation to Nazi symbolism, and the implications of this for African Americans. This is one example of recontextualizing the Confederate emblem. Davenport opens his article with discussion of the display of the Nazi flag at the Church of Les Invalides in Paris, France. It is illegal to display the Nazi flag in Germany, but the flag hangs in Paris as a “captured flag” (Davenport 51). He suggests that the flag has a different connotation in this specific context, because it is in a sense, “captured,” and therefore fallen. It gains a new rhetorical force as a captured flag, not able to harness the power it once did. Davenport also discusses the idea of “obsolete patriotism,” which is what he references when he sees the flag flown in South Carolina — especially when the flag was flown on the South Carolina Statehouse grounds before its removal in 2015, after the Charleston church shooting. Davenport also writes about the use of the flag flown in front of certain fraternities as one of “childish mindlessness.”

As Davenport concludes, he suggests that African Americans might “wittingly” display the flag as a form of reclaiming it, much like the Swastika displayed in Paris. This has interesting connections to the Nu South clothing line historian John C. Cobb writes about, started by Angel Quintero and Sherman Evans, where they replace the Confederate colors with Garvey colors, therefore attempting to reclaim the meaning of the flag. Asking students to engage with

scholarship like this allows for further conversation about tradition and the meaning of the Confederate battle flag.

A writing prompt might ask students why groups feel the need “reclaim” the flag, and how these acts complicate the meaning and tradition of the flag. As students read these narratives, they are getting the “other side” not commonly portrayed in traditional heritage narratives. As students read Lévinas along with these texts, they will begin to internalize the “obligation” to listen with Ratcliffe’s concept of rhetorical listening. I connect this to Lévinas here, as Anthony Beavers suggests in his short paper “Introducing Lévinas to Undergraduate Philosophers” that the appeal of Lévinas is his ability to dwell in life, rather than dealing exclusively in theory. Students will find this accessible as they navigate through New Dialogic pedagogy. The Levinasian notion of totalization would also be helpful here, which when simply defined is knowing and/or assuming what the other is about before they speak (Beavers).

Furthermore, students will familiarize themselves with the idea of proximity, and how Lévinas views proximity of the other. In *Totality and Infinity*, Lévinas suggests that encounters with others are a “privileged” phenomenon, in which the proximity of the other is felt and noted. Thinking back to Bakhtin and his world of the dialogic, Holquist reminds us of Bakhtin’s “...emphasis on otherness” (37). As students begin to see interaction with others as a positive force, they will begin to understand the harmful effect of totalization. Assuming

we know what the other will say hearkens back to tradition as a forceful form of rhetoric, and the shutting down of marginalized voices.

In another mode, South Carolinian Leo Twiggs, an African American artist, paints the flag in artwork that places it as a tattered, worn relic, often with the death of fellow Black people or the haunting white faces of its bearers. Unlike texts, which convey a kind of certainty and direction, art can trigger deeper emotional reactions and multiplicity of opinions like Bakhtin's dialogism calls for. Terrorist Dylann Roof obsessed over flag imagery with the Confederate battle flag, alongside other racist symbols like the state flag of Rhodesia, on his social media accounts. Additionally, a writing assignment might ask students to write about *why* designers like Quintero and Evans, or artists like Twiggs, might want to reclaim the flag in such a way. Assignments like this, when placed in tandem with a carefully constructed syllabus, can positively disturb, promoting students to consider the other side not commonly represented.

Another sample assignment demonstrating a positive disturbance might be through the use of Photovoice, a qualitative method used for community-based participatory research. Through Photovoice, students are asked to express themselves, and aspects of their community, by taking photographs that represent a theme of the class. These themes are centered on social issues. For example, I might ask students at Clemson University to research and photograph the hidden racism of the institution, drawing attention to the fact that Clemson

was built on a plantation, and also the naming of campus buildings after domestic terrorists like Benjamin Tillman and segregationists like Strom Thurmond.

Photovoice could serve as an added pedagogical tool to the work already in place by Thomas and Bartley.

Through the “making” of assignments, both in written and multimodal formats, students are then ready to move into the “doing.” I relate the “doing” in my classroom to Bitzer’s notion of exigency, and when an exigence is rhetorical. Students realize the importance of dialogic rhetoric as they positively modify situations through engaging with new forms of discourse. “Making,” in and of itself, gives students the chance to take control of the learning they are doing. If assignments are carefully constructed, like the use of Photovoice, this making will guide students to think about themes like social justice in ways that are proactive and positive for both the campus community and community at large. Because an assignment using Photovoice is different from what students “expect” in a writing classroom, the assignment fits into the realm of the disturbance. Asking students to engage with difficult material, like institutional racism, through different forms of argument, like photography, mediates direct engagement in the sociology of race. This allows for expression without words and the conveyance of emotion.

Even if a classroom exists on a campus that does not host a Kappa Alpha chapter, it would still be a strong service to teach concepts from this chapter, and

what I term New Dialogic Pedagogy. Racism is most often removed not by professors, historians, or educated professionals, but by friends questioning and signaling to other friends. Professors can encourage this behavior through reading lists, assignments, and classroom activities promoting dialogic pedagogy.

Some of our campuses are on “lockdown” by KA chapters, alumni, and Greek life that see their primary task as protecting students from becoming aware of their racial resentment, campus “unrest,” or negative press repercussions to the institution. Skirting institutional risk aversion, individual conversations between students at different institutions could be a deeply meaningful way to liquify the frozen loci of white supremacist and resentment rhetorics. I have suggested that this rhetoric can be dismantled not only through continued scholarship, but also through positive pedagogical disturbance and action in the first-year writing classroom and beyond. The academic and social outcomes of this dismantling might result in a New Dialogism which promotes teaching for activism.

As I explicate in my introduction, teaching for activism and awareness is paramount now as our divided country faces a very uncertain future. As educators we must address this not just through continued scholarly research, but also through community building and action in the classroom and beyond. Research and scholarship are not enough; we must enact what it is we want to

do. Implementing what I call New Dialogic pedagogy within the classroom provides for new ways of knowing, making, and doing.

Students, by engaging with canonical theory in tandem with modern theory place a multiplicity of voices in conversation, showing students the dialogic in action. Hopefully, this theory, when combined with classroom assignments, can guide students to reconsider the power of tradition and how understanding another set of traditions might be beneficial. Through New Dialogic pedagogy students will begin to discern that questioning tradition can lead to a more holistic awareness, providing new ways of understanding how symbols like that of the Confederate battle flag embody more than one meaning.

Through engagement with the previously mentioned texts, combined with a rhetorical analysis of resentment posts like those on the *Total Frat Move* website, students will be exposed to pedagogy that will encourage ways of thinking about the world that they might have been previously unaware of. With this, it is my goal for students to make productive and informed decisions when being faced with comments like those on *Total Frat Move*, or when blindly defending tradition, like the ongoing use and defense of the Confederate battle flag.

CHAPTER FIVE

RHETORICAL OUTLIERS: OVERCOMING WHITE SUPREMACY

In front of the face, I always demand more of myself.

*-Emmanuel Lévinas, "Signature" 294 in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism**

In Chapter One, I briefly mention examples of individuals that were able to successfully leave white supremacy behind. I'll provide some of these examples now. I provide these examples not to promote idealism, or to promote the idea that everyone can change, but to highlight that through human connection and identification, unity can occur. Chapter Five serves several purposes, chief among these is the idea that change from white supremacist attitudes through community action and involvement is both necessary and possible. This is important, since much of my research is focused on bridging the gap between the theoretical and the actual. Here, I turn to the idea of participatory critical rhetoric.

Participatory Critical Rhetoric

As Michael Middleton, Aaron Hess, Danielle Endres, and Samantha Senda-Cook discuss in the Introduction to their book *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, "...field-based approaches to rhetorical criticism raise generative questions and provoke new discussions that are at the core of theorizing

rhetorical practice” (xv). They continue, by suggesting “participatory critical rhetoric theorizes field-based rhetoric” (xv). The idea of participatory critical rhetoric, along with the concept of invitational rhetoric, serve as part of the framework for this chapter. As Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin articulate in “Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for Invitational Rhetoric,” part of what invitational rhetoric encompasses is the concept of “self-determination” (5). As I highlight throughout this chapter, self-determination is an important component when thinking about the role of community rhetors.

Throughout this chapter I also provide examples of rhetors making changes in their own communities (the concept of the community rhetor). My own research seeks to blend advocacy and activism, which relates back to the concept of field-based approaches often found in participatory critical rhetoric. Through this blending of advocacy and activism, “...critical-rhetorical ethnography privileges access to locally situated, vernacular rhetorics and seeks to partner with rhetors than merely study them” (xv). It is this idea and practice of partnering with rhetoricians involved in change *in situ* that I am interested in.

Furthermore, “...rhetorical field methods provide a means to identify emancipatory potential in the communities that rhetoricians study and a way to better understand live(d) rhetoric” (xv). In the following section I provide a very real and raw example of lived rhetoric. The example highlights an idea that came

about while talking with a colleague about my research.⁷⁹ This idea is called Inverse Enculturation — individuals leaving the characteristics and norms of their previous culture of white supremacy behind.

Lived rhetoric is seeing and investigating what people are doing in their communities to impart change, equity, and social justice. The first example I provide is the Sickside Tattoo Shop in Memphis, Tennessee, where strides are being made to literally “erase” hate. The other example is through a film directed by African American filmmaker Danielle Beverly. Through her film *Old South*, Beverly forms a unique connection to the Kappa Alpha Order fraternity at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia. At this point, we are all familiar with Kappa Alpha, as they have been a large focus of this dissertation. I also provide a detailed account of an interview I conducted with a member of the organization United Daughters of the Confederacy. This interview is included in this chapter because I hope to continue my research on this group as the basis for ongoing ethnographic research of a group that employs a form of white semiotics.

My informant was quick to disavow any connection between the Confederate battle flag and white supremacy and expressed a desire to work with other charitable organizations within the community to promote the greater good. This is *in situ* rhetoric in action. As I discuss in this chapter, community

⁷⁹ Thank you to Dr. Brian Gaines for helping me to uncover this idea.

events can serve as an important force in the rhetorical situation, allowing for change to occur through listening and action.

At Sickside Tattoo Shop, tattoo artist TM Garret offers to cover up past tattoos from extremist groups for free. Garret, a former supporter of Nazi ideology and former member of the Ku Klux Klan, now leads seminars and forums on the dangers of racism. In these seminars and forums, Garret candidly talks about past experiences and what prompted him to change. He also offers support and resources through these seminars. I consider Garret a vernacular rhetor, a concept I will discuss at length. Garret's hope for these seminars is that they will reach others that are considering leaving these extreme lifestyles. Additionally, his group Erase the Hate, offers services to those that have already left extremist lifestyles. These extremist lifestyles vary from membership in ISIS to white supremacist and neo-Confederate organizations.

Extremist lifestyles are similar to addiction as Pete Simi, Kathleen Blee, Matthew DeMichele, and Steven Windisch highlight in their article "Addicted to Hate: Identity Residual among Former White Supremacists." As they articulate, "disengagement from white supremacy is characterized by substantial lingering effects that subjects describe as addiction" (1). In this sense, Erase the Hate functions like other support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Members congregate together for support as they battle to find a better life, away from whatever substance or ideology was plaguing them. Moreover, part of what

Erase the Hate does is remove tattoos indicating former membership in a hate group. They do this for free, helping individuals to begin a fresh start in life. Garret also runs a non-profit organization called CHANGE — standing for Care, Hope, Awareness, Need, Give, and Education (Bloom). Through this organization, Garret talks openly about his past life growing up in Germany and his membership in the Klan. He also openly discusses what finally prompted him to leave his past lifestyle behind.

As a teenager growing up in Germany, Garret identified with Nationalism and white supremacy. Supporting Nazi ideology gave Garret something that was “his” — something that would separate him from others (Bloom). Harkening back to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, this relates to his notion of how power is both symbolically and culturally created. Whereas Foucault saw power as a ubiquitous force, Bourdieu saw power as something that could be constructed culturally and symbolically. Through his idea of “habitus,”⁸⁰ power can be re-legitimized. This is explored in Bourdieu’s article “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” and is also elaborated on by sociologist and social anthropologist L  ic Wacquant and sociologist Zander Navarro. Garret wanted to be distinguished from others, and he found this through immersion into both

⁸⁰ According to Bourdieu, the concept of “habitus” refers to socialized norms or tendencies that guide behavior and thinking. According to Elaine M. Power, in her article “An Introduction to Pierre Bourdieu’s Key Theoretical Concepts,” habitus “is [Bourdieu’s] way of explaining the regularities of behavior that are associated with social structures, such as class, gender, and ethnicity, without making social structures deterministic of behavior, or losing sight of the individual’s own agency” (48).

White Nationalism and white supremacy. Later, while still living in Germany, Garret joined the International Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Bloom). He traveled from Germany to Hattiesburg, Mississippi where he was appointed as “...Grand Dragon of the newly anointed European White Knights” (Bloom).

When Garret returned to Germany his branch of the Klan was put under heavy surveillance and at that point, he decided to leave the Klan; however, despite his departure from the Klan, he still identified as a racist (Bloom). It wasn't until a pointed personal encounter when Garret finally began to think differently about racism. At this point in his life, Garret had moved to the small town of Giengen, Germany (Bloom). One day, a Turkish man living in his same apartment complex offered to pay Garret for assistance with his computer. Himmet Özdemir, the man Garret had been helping, eventually invited Garret to have dinner with him and his family (Bloom). Garret admits at first, he felt strange around Özdemir, but he accepted the offer to help with the computer issues because he needed the money (Bloom). Dinner with Özdemir and his family was a catalyst for Garret. When Özdemir and his family did not fulfill the stereotypes Garret had been waiting for — when they were “just nice and compassionate,” this was when Garret knew was wrong (Bloom).

Moving forward, the German Klan group Garret was affiliated with was still under scrutiny; moreover, the evidence that German police officers were Klan members also escalated the media coverage (Bloom). Garret was eventually

cleared of any “wrongdoing,” and he then relocated to a small town in Mississippi to begin a career in country music (Bloom). Garret’s dinner with Himmet Özdemir and Özdemir’s family prompted personal change, but it was national events that occurred upon Garret’s move to the United States that prompted Garret to take even further action.

Following the shooting of Alton B. Sterling and Philando Castile in July 2016, Garret knew he needed to act (Bloom). Sterling was shot at close range in Baton Rouge, Louisiana after a misunderstanding. Following news reports, Sterling was thought to be someone else that matched a description of a man wearing a red shirt that was selling CDs outside of a convenience store (Lopez). Even after Sterling had been immobilized on the ground, he was still shot multiple times by police (Lopez).

Philando Castille was killed in front of his girlfriend and her four-year old daughter as he was trying to reach for his license after he was pulled over for a faulty brake light in St. Paul, Minnesota (Croft). Castille was complying with orders as he told the officer he was armed, but that he was simply reaching for his identification (Croft). After these killings, to paraphrase from Garret’s own words, he knew he wanted to do something to address the gap between white and black (Bloom). This gap in identification is a topic I address in my own work. My article, *A Response to Greig Henderson’s “Dialogism Versus Monologism: Burke, Bakhtin, and the Languages of Social Change”* illuminates ways that

informing and enacting, through dialogic discourse, can address current social and political discord, as well as the gap in identification between divided groups.

Garret is the embodiment of this informing and enacting. His involvement with the community is dialogic rather than purely dialectic. His goal is not to come out as a “winner” through speaking engagements — instead, he focuses on meaningful exchange with others. As I discuss previously, Garret now leads seminars and forums, and is a regular speaker at the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish human rights organization based out of Los Angeles (Bloom). He is a community rhetor — the embodiment of vernacular rhetoric. This concept is also explored by Gerald A. Hauser in “Rhetoric, Vernacular.” As Hauser explains, the rhetorical tradition has expanded and shifted. He argues how the rhetorical tradition now “reconsider[s] excluded voices without access to official sites, voices that are not in positions of leadership, or whose modes of expression do not take the form of public address or formal essay, by considering them as they were manifested in vernacular exchanges, or vernacular rhetoric” (1).

Through speaking the language of the “community” Garret practices vernacular rhetoric. As I discuss, it is important for those in the academy to foster relationships with community rhetors. As Derek Sweet delineates in his chapter “The Rhetorical Turn,” part of the larger book *The Evolution of Human Communication: From Theory to Practice*, “Rhetoric as becoming...accentuates the role of rhetoric in collaborative meaning making.” Collaborative meaning

making should be of prime importance now, as both academics and other community members must take action against the rise in white supremacy. Although this chapter addresses outliers and those making strides against supremacy, the Southern Poverty Law Center still reminds us the number of hate groups in America has reached a new high in 2019 (“Hate groups reach record high”). These numbers continue to grow in 2020.

Garret’s friend Drew Darby is also part of Erase the Hate, and when interviewed Darby stated they do tattoo coverups every week (Bloom). This is important because tattoos serve an important role in rhetorical identification. As I discuss, memberships in hate groups continue to rise, but this is met with many deciding to leave these lifestyles behind. These coverups serve as a real, tangible, indication of that. Furthermore, it seems these tattoo coverups are for genuine reasons. They don’t seem to be just so these individuals can get a job, or for them to be able to “blend” into society without being noticed. The extensive time needed to cover up or remove some of these large and extensive markings highlights the sincerity of individuals wholly committing to leaving these lifestyles behind. Furthermore, tattoos are very important in white supremacist groups. For example, when white supremacist Jeffrey Scott Young was on trial for murder, he was described as a “walking billboard of hate” by one of the prosecuting attorneys (qtd. in Farzan). His range of tattoos included a swastika, along with “...a Confederate flag and a tree with a noose dangling from it” (Farzan). To want

to cover up such an important form of identification suggests how these individuals really are ready to move forward away from the hate and the lifestyle they have been entrenched in.

Furthering my ideas that these transformations are genuine, writer Deborah Bloom also tells the story of former white supremacist Nathan Greer. Greer suffered from both heart and kidney failure and was in a coma for six months (Bloom). He found it difficult to find a doctor that would operate on him due to the large swastika covering his chest (Bloom). Greer said when he awoke from his coma following his heart and kidney failure, he resisted the help of his doctor and nurse, but his feelings began to change over time. Greer's assigned doctor was Jewish, and his assigned nurse was African American. In his own words: "I was letting them look at me, and every day it started to get better and better until one day I was cuttin' up with them, and they were sharing with me more and more" (Bloom). Greer also wanted to change for his young daughter, as he didn't want her to grow up being exposed to a life of hate.

Empty rhetoric functions as emotional force (Pathos) without logic (Logos). Overall, this emotional force appeals to fear in this case. Hidden in this rhetoric of fear is repurposed eugenics for the 21st century, as is displayed throughout *A Fair Hearing*. Here, I must also further define "empty rhetoric." I define the type of rhetoric these groups employ as "empty," due to it being an antithesis as to how I define rhetoric. The groups outlined in *A Fair Hearing* are using rhetoric as

persuasion, and are still, in a sense, practicing a form of dialectic. They want to persuade, but they are doing so through logical fallacies and an overabundance of emotional appeal designed to elicit fear. They are not using rhetoric *responsibly*. The rhetoric used by the alt-right and extremist groups can be penetrated, and this penetration is usually done through experience and a face-to-face encounter.

Drawing on Lévinas, and his notion of ethics, when we encounter the face of the Other we are also coming face-to-face with an ethical responsibility. We see this in the case of Garret and Greer. Greer, upon coming out of a coma, found himself literally face-to-face with the Other. As I discussed, it was through face-to-face interaction with both his doctor and nurse that he started to have a change of heart. Greer died before he could fully have his swastika covered, but his story, and others like his, suggest positive change can occur. As his story circulates, so can the idea of community rhetoric. Community rhetoric functions as a type of antidote to empty rhetoric, as rhetors like Garret and Greer help others to overcome the fear and empty rhetoric I describe above.

It is important to understand hate and what makes hate possible, which is why I spend so much time throughout this dissertation explicating how white supremacy is constructed rhetorically. It is also why I spend time unpacking *A Fair Hearing*, which as I articulate is the most recent edited collection written by authors who identify as alt-right and white supremacists. These authors are also

considered to be the “prominent” leaders of the movement by the media. It is also important to understand how and why people leave the ideology of white supremacy behind, further augmenting and solidifying the importance of this chapter. Conflict will always exist but studying individuals like Garret and the community change they impart is one way that conflict can be ameliorated. Overall, I see the work of those involved with the Sickside Tattoo shop and the CHANGE non-profit as a form of inverse enculturation. However, inverse enculturation is not always easy, but can happen.

Vernacular Rhetoric

Thinking about the concept of participatory rhetoric and the idea of partnering with local rhetors, TM Garret is an amazing example. Garret is what I term a vernacular rhetor — I mention his leadership and speaking roles at seminars and forums (Bloom). His embodied experiences make Garret who he is, and by sharing these experiences with the public through speaking engagements and forums he becomes a practitioner of vernacular and community rhetoric. Partnering with someone like Garret would be a unique and powerful step for field-based, participatory rhetoric. In terms of pedagogy, it would also be beneficial for students to attend a talk by someone like Garret or participate in local fieldwork investigating how those like Garret are able to succeed in inverse enculturation and inspire others to do the same. This type of pedagogical involvement would be useful to add to the interventions I already

discuss in Chapter Four of this dissertation. For example, in Chapter Four I propose a sample assignment that asks students to write about *why* designers like Angel Quintero and Sherman Evans, or artists like Leo Twiggs, might want to reclaim the Confederate battle flag in such a way as to remove its power from white supremacists. Working in tandem with this assignment, I could ask students to write about the power of inverse enculturation. Students can tackle writing prompts investigating Garret's role as a community rhetor and how his actions might influence others through vernacular rhetoric.

Since 2016, white supremacists have been emboldened. The political and cultural climate of the United States has made this possible, yet deeper analysis is required. This emboldening is something I have been discussing throughout this dissertation, but it is also important to note that with the increase in white supremacist activity there has also been an increased movement of those trying to leave the white supremacist lifestyle. This is also indicated by the tattoo removals I discuss above. As scholars, why is this something we should be interested in? Wes Enzinna writes about this very topic in his article "Inside the Radical, Uncomfortable Movement to Reform White Supremacists." Enzinna also makes note of the increased number of individuals attempting to leave the lifestyle behind. Furthermore, Enzinna discusses the importance of understanding the minds of "violent racists," and how this understanding has

“...gained newfound urgency as the country struggles to defeat the next generation of extremists.”

My dissertation builds on this work, as I explain how white supremacy is rhetorically constructed. This discussion of rhetorical construction, built on theory, fulfills the scholarly aspect of my research. But I hope through pedagogy and through participatory critical rhetoric and community engagement that I can also help to bridge the gap between the scholarly and the “everyday.” In order to defeat the next generation of extremists, there needs to be a coalition of those working both in the academy and out. Through this coalition white supremacy and extremist groups can be targeted from all angles.

Doxxing

There has been some scholarly research on what to “do” with white supremacists. One area explored is that of “doxxing,” which is the practice of revealing one’s personal information and identity publicly. Does doxxing have an impact on white supremacists or make them stop their behavior? Although it might be a short-term solution, I argue doxxing is not sustainable as a long-term solution to stop white supremacy. It does nothing to change behavior, and as I argue, it often reinforces the very ways of thinking we are trying to work against. The phenomenon of doxxing, once solely contained in the hands of hackers, has also become more mainstream. One reason for this is what happened in Charlottesville.

Following the riots, activists went to work to expose those that took part in the Unite the Right rally. Many of these individuals were already out in the open, like Richard Spencer, but many were not. Referencing what happened in Charlottesville, “Hate has consequences,” is the slogan for the One People’s Project, a group and website created by anti-fascist activist Daryle Lamont Jenkins. As Vegas Tenold recounts in his article “To Doxx a Racist,” Jenkins fully supports “Doxxing, public shaming, loss of employment, [and] even death” when it comes to those involved in events such as the Charlottesville riots. To Jenkins, these are the consequences one should be prepared to pay for racist behavior (Tenold). Jenkins asserting that hate has consequences is yet another direct response to the current political climate of America.

John M. Parker, the governor of Louisiana, called for “the light of publicity” to expose then members of the Ku Klux Klan (Tenold). This was between 1920-1924 and was perhaps the first attempt at exposure and early forms of doxxing (Tenold). Parker’s “light of publicity,” although a step forward, really made no difference in the lives of those he wished to call out (Tenold). Furthermore, in the 1920s, communities were more insular, and news stayed local. This America was far different from current times, where information travels at light speed and one’s identity and personal information can be made public in an instant. The fact that personal information can be shared in an instant with millions is not always ethical, and therefore requires rhetorical consideration. What if the wrong person

is doxxed, or an individual or minor is doxxed as a form of “collateral damage?”

As Jared S. Colton, Steve Holmes and Josephine Walwema discuss in “From NoobGuides to #OpKKK: Anonymous’ Tactical Technical Communication”:

In a confirmation of the ethical ambiguity of doxxing as a tactical practice, Anonymous previously threatened to doxx the school schedule of the teenage daughter of John Belmar, the police chief of Ferguson, Missouri. Anonymous’ goal was to force Belmar to release the names of the officers who had shot Michael Brown, the African American victim whose death was the catalyst for the 2014 protests, by potentially exposing a tangentially related target to the threat of physical harm, stalking, or other forms of online and offline harassment (60).

Anonymous, for the purposes of clarity, I will define as a loosely organized “hacktivist” group. Anonymous has used doxxing as a form of activism, but as we see from the previous example doxxing can be problematic, especially from an ethical standpoint.

I list these examples to show the range of doxxing, and how it can exist on multiple levels and on all sides of the political spectrum. Returning to Charlottesville, some of the public accusations were warranted and some were not, as there was at least one individual falsely identified through doxxing. For example, Kyle Quinn, an engineer in Arkansas, was wrongly identified once the photos from the rally went public. Although identifying Nazis and white

supremacists seems like the obvious “right” thing to do, this forced uncovering is problematic as it might serve as a reinforcement for some people, while also opening larger portals of privacy/surveillance concerns. In terms of gatekeeping, who decides what “truth” the public is privy to? Due to the recent increase in doxxing as a tool, it is important to understand how it functions rhetorically. Although scholarly literature exists on the doxxing phenomenon,⁸¹ and on racism and nationalism in participatory media spaces,⁸² it is paramount to continue to consider doxxing through a framework that considers how it relates to white supremacy. On one hand, opposing doxxing might be seen as restriction of freedom of speech while also promoting illiberal ideology. On the other hand, supporting doxxing might reinforce behaviors, pushing away from any sort of identification or terministic choice to overcome strife. For future research, I would like to continue researching the impact of doxxing and the rhetorical implications it might enforce.

Enzinna also goes against the beliefs that doxxing purports, suggesting how providing empathy may be of value to those attempting to leave an extremist lifestyle behind. From the standpoint of sociology, one important book I have come across in my research is the book *Healing From Hate*, by Michael Kimmel. Kimmel explores how masculinity plays an important role in how and why young

⁸¹ See Rose Eveleth and Jasmine McNealy.

⁸² See Robert J. Topinka.

men join hate groups in the first place. This is an interesting correlation to Chapter Three, where I discuss how the alt-right employs tropes of toxic masculinity to both garner and keep male followers, while placing female members of the alt-right in the home, where they can do their part to ensure the healthy continuation of the white race. By playing on tropes of male dominance, masculinity, and gender roles, the alt-right is able to garner more male followers. A lot of this fear comes from anxiety about males being “replaced.” Fear of cultural and racial replacement is “...also driven by the same sort of insecurity about masculinity that underlies the so-called Men’s Rights Movement and the increasingly dangerous and self-destructive cult of self-described ‘involuntary celibates,’ or incels” (Futrelle). Incels are a large part of the alt-right, and we can see here how this same toxic masculinity is found in white supremacist groups as well.

In *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*, Kenneth Burke suggests how terministic screens affect the way that individuals perceive things: “Not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the attention to one field rather than to another” (46). How might doxxing reinforce certain behaviors, or augment the pushing away from any sort of identification or terministic choice to overcome strife? Returning to anti-fascist activist Jenkins and his group the One People’s Project, Jenkins fully supports doxxing as a consequence for racist behavior

(Tenold). Part of doxxing might include public shaming, loss of employment, and even death, as Jenkins asserts. I support this notion of people being fully responsible for their racist actions, and they should be willing to face consequences. However, I am more wary of a “gatekeeping” type of mentality, and that death, as a complete and irreversible action, is seen here as an end goal. Additionally, this chapter also investigates how community action can target white supremacy, without gatekeepers at the helm.

As an example, Andrew Dodson was doxxed after the Charlottesville riots, but not after amateur doxxers misidentified the previously mentioned Kyle Quinn as Andrew (Tenold). Their red hair and similar facial features are comparable, but Kyle Quinn, a professor at the University of Arkansas that runs a wound-care clinic, was not at the white nationalist rally. The real Andrew Dodson was fired from his job, as many others were that were publicly outed (Tenold). This is a step forward from the days that doctors, lawyers, teachers, pastors, and other so-called pillars of the white community could openly flaunt their KKK membership as a celebration within their respective communities. We see action as a result of these identities being made public. In this light, doxxing is seen as a positive act, resulting in a form of justice. This justice of course, was handled outside of a courtroom. The implications and consequences that might arise from the act of doxxing is an almost “hand-made” type of justice, and once these identities were made known and circulated, the friends, families, and employers of those that

were doxxed could do what they wanted with the information. One man was renounced from his family, and many others were fired from their places of employment (Tenold).

Andrew Dodson died not long after he lost his job, on March 9, 2018 (Tenold). Dodson's death was from a drug overdose, which also appeared to be a suicide. His death was celebrated as a martyrdom by the likes of Richard Spencer and on the other side, as a celebration by those involved with the anti-fascist movement (Tenold). There's an archived thread on the subreddit r/RightwingLGBT with a video of Dodson, asking for the threats to stop on his family. The comments on this video are worthy of a separate rhetorical analysis, but I use Dodson's death as a case study of how public doxxing can reinforce behaviors. To again reference *Healing from Hate*, it is important to try to understand what draws men into these organizations. It is important to understand women's roles as well, but for the scope of this chapter I am focusing on the connection between white supremacy and misogyny and toxic masculinity. For example, in future research, I hope to rhetorically investigate women's roles in the alt-right and hate groups.

Elizabeth Gillespie McRae begins this investigation in her book *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy*. Although she does not address women in modern hate groups, she discusses how women have been heavy influencers in racial segregation from the 1920s to

the 1970s. The book also traces how women censored textbooks, denied marriage certificates in the South, and worked to elect racist government officials (McRae). In the South, women played an important role in enforcing Jim Crow laws and maintaining the “separate but equal” mindset. This separate but equal mindset is still found today, as I discuss in my next section.

Old South

Another form of community involvement involving an “ongoing social flux” (Edbauer Rice 9), is the work of African American filmmaker Danielle Beverly. Her film, *Old South*, is an investigation into the Kappa Alpha Chapter at the University of Georgia (UGA) in Athens, Georgia. Overall, the film tells the surprising story of a community coming together. Although the film is not without issue, it offers a space for communication and discourse that was not present before in the town of Athens. The film was created to document the UGA chapter of Kappa Alpha and their desire to purchase a house to be used for their fraternity in a historic African American neighborhood in Athens. Kappa Alpha’s background and history made this move troubling for the residents of the neighborhood.

It took Beverly nearly four years to complete filming, and she fully set up in the neighborhood to watch the totality of the events unfold as the fraternity purchased the house and began moving in (“An Examination of the Racial Divide in ‘Old South’”). Beverly interviewed members of the fraternity about their

complicated history and use of the Confederate battle flag and also filmed several fraternity events, which included a parade at the beginning of the film where fraternity members donned Confederate uniforms.

Although billed as an observational documentary, I consider Beverly's film to be an essay film, differing from a documentary in the sense that the film promotes the idea of the "I" and "you." As film scholar Laura Rascaroli explicates in "The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments," part of the larger *Essays on the Essay Film*, "The 'I' of the essay film always clearly and strongly implicates a 'you,' and for me, this is a key aspect of the deep structures of the form" (185). This notion of the "I" and "you" relates to the ongoing social flux present in Edbauer's definition of the rhetorical situation, as well as to the idea of Inverse Enculturation, or moving away from the culture and identity one used to strongly identify with. The I and you represent what ultimately begins to happen in the film, as fraternity members are prompted to think about how their actions have broader social implications.

The opening of *Old South* seems to foreshadow much of what I have already discussed regarding fraternities, Kappa Alpha Order, and the Confederate battle flag. As Beverly's film begins, it seems logical that the remainder of the film will explore racism and the perpetuation of the Confederate ideology associated with the history of the fraternity. This relates back to the overwhelmingly monologic thinking of certain groups in the South and beyond,

which I discuss through my definition and explanation of Confederate rhetoric. By monologic thinking, I am again referring to the concept of using tradition to shut down conversation, rather than opening it up. The Confederate battle flag, as I discuss, has often hidden, unchecked, under the guise of tradition. The concept of tradition continues to be an excuse for so much, and in the American South tradition is often synonymous with lack of regard for the Other, which Beverly explores throughout her film.

Old South begins with the ubiquitous Southern slogan: “The South will Rise again!” As a slogan that is often heard, yet rarely investigated, I decided to do some research on its origins. The Raab collection⁸³ is an online collection of historical documents for purchase curated by consultant and authenticator Nathan Raab. Included for sale in this collection was the letter written by Jefferson Davis to a close friend as he awaited trial for treason following the conclusion of the Civil War (“Jefferson Davis Hopes the ‘Oppressed South’ Shall ‘Rise Again’”). In this letter to his friend Davis penned the now famous expression. Raab offers more information on the saying, stating “the expression ‘The South shall rise again’ is one that everyone has heard, not only in the southern states but throughout the entire nation” (“Jefferson Davis Hopes the

⁸³ I use the RAAB Collection due to being able to view the original letter written by Jefferson Davis.

‘Oppressed South’ Shall ‘Rise Again’”). I have also heard the slogan in my own travels overseas.

As the Raab collection conveys, the slogan has been used “as a political slogan, a regional emblem, a football battle cry, and even the title of a 1950s song” (“Jefferson Davis Hopes the ‘Oppressed South’ Shall ‘Rise Again’”). The slogan is problematic, yet it also has sinister implications, due to the adoption of the phrase by the political group the “Redeemers.” The Redeemers, throughout the 1870s to the 1920s, “actively promoted a return to conservative Democratic rule and opposed the Republican-led, federally imposed local and state governments, which they saw as corrupt and a violation of true principles” (“Jefferson Davis Hopes the ‘Oppressed South’ Shall ‘Rise Again’”). Equally as troubling is their dedication to white dominance and supremacy (“Jefferson Davis Hopes the ‘Oppressed South’ Shall ‘Rise Again’”). Candidates and supporters of the Redeemers adopted the slogan that the South will rise again to incite “racial confrontation” (“Jefferson Davis Hopes the ‘Oppressed South’ Shall ‘Rise Again’”).

Politically, the Redeemers did all they could to fight equality — this included murder. For example, “...in 1868 alone, there were over 1,000 political murders in Louisiana, most of the victims being freedmen” (“Jefferson Davis Hopes the ‘Oppressed South’ Shall ‘Rise Again’”). Due to the very intentional racist background of the origin of the slogan, I was ready for the rest of *Old South*

following the opening to be similar. Without knowing what the film was about, one would perhaps brace themselves for an exposé of a very racist fraternity.

However, Beverly produced a different type of film. In the wake of the racist fraternity events I expose in Chapter Four, the film provides a hopeful angle, highlighting how some of these young men *are* capable of seeing tradition and their relationship to tradition differently.

Athens, Georgia, home to the University of Georgia, also reflects the inherent and monologic conversation involving race relations. There are still separate neighborhoods, and elderly African American residents recall throughout the opening of *Old South* how, "...things have remained separate," despite the ending of segregation after the Civil Rights movement. In Georgia, Jim Crow laws were severe, going as far as having separate public parks for whites and African Americans ("A Brief History of Jim Crow"). Opening shots of *Old South* show storefronts in Athens with Confederate battle flags and other Civil War-era paraphernalia, including Confederate uniforms and guns.

Athens is still a town divided, 63 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, and this is reflected through the built environment of the city. This division is also made apparent through the educational institutions within the state, indicating that *Brown v. Board* did little to change actual attitudes and beliefs. From my own trip to Athens, I was able to observe much of what was reflected in the opening shots of the film. I was in Athens for a weekend attending a conference, and

during this time I made sure to make a stop in General Beauregard's, a popular and well-known Confederate-themed bar. The bar seemed a very real and tangible reminder of race relations for the city, as well as for modern segregation, that many residents said still existed.

The University of Georgia, dubbed the "birthplace of higher education," does not reflect the diversity of the state, and it is built on the very land where slavery thrived. Because Kappa Alpha Order is part of the larger University of Georgia, it is important to look at the demographics of the university. For example, "Black students represent just 7 percent of its student population (or about 2,000 undergrads), in a state where black students are 34 percent of all high school graduates" (Chiles). The Hechinger Report also states how "Interviews with black students on the Georgia campus revealed that while they have not often encountered racial strife in classrooms, they sometimes experience unpleasantness because of their race in the dorms and in social situations" (Chiles).

One example given by a student recounts when a group of African American friends went to a white fraternity party—almost immediately, they were told that the cops were coming, signifying that they needed to leave (Chiles). However, the students knew that the cops were not coming—this was just a known code for the African American students to leave (Chiles). In such a charged and complex environment, exigence is apparent, and this is one of the

reasons why the film was created. *Old South* reflects many characteristics of an essay film, including dialogic encounters with the audience, as well as a specific concentration on public life in regard to the fraternity members. In terms of foregrounding subjective points of view, many points of view are included, which produces interesting multiple conversations within the film. The Confederate parade and hostility at the beginning of the film give way to an ending that hints at identification, understanding, and friendship between the fraternity members and the African American community. Through the use of and reclaiming of land by the creation of a community garden tended to by the fraternity members and the community, *Old South* reworks the common stereotypes one might usually associate with Kappa Alpha.

The garden, as a symbol, produces a space for the fraternity members to work in the historic community they originally entered without asking. Although this does not excuse their actions, it might at least open a space for dialogue. The young men working side-by-side with other members of the community allows for conversation to happen. Relationships are formed, and although racial divide still exists, the differences seem a little bit smaller. Although *Old South* is a small step and just one story within the entire region of the South, the film does work as an outlier, showing how views concerning heritage can shift, which is desperately needed. The essayistic elements present in the film allow for an increased space for conversation, one that was not expected nor previously

present. Why is this discourse and conversation needed? A brief history of Southern fraternities, as I present in Chapter Four, suggests why. Racism within Southern fraternities is not an isolated occurrence, and it is widespread enough to warrant both community and scholarly investigation. *Old South* can help with this.

Beverly brings out awareness of the past and heritage in her film, especially when engaging with the young fraternity members. As she interviews the members, she asks them questions about fraternity culture that they have most likely never considered before. My own experiences with Kappa Alpha members mirrors this. Members practice rituals or support symbols like the Confederate battle flag because it has always been done —and, in many cases it is what their fathers and grandfathers have done before them. Through open conversation about their past and why the members value figures like Robert E. Lee, Beverly pushes, though without force, for the members to consider why they *think* the way they do, and why they *value* what they do. This even occurs in a humorous manner at the conclusion, when a fraternity member suggests that he might even sell his truck, as he does not have a specific purpose for it, other than just to “fit in.” Having a truck to “fit in” mirrors a type of reverse concept of distinction. Bourdieu’s assertion in *Distinction* that working-class people expect an object to fulfill a function is flipped here. The truck is not used for its function to haul items for farming or for work but is instead used a symbol of conspicuous

consumption highlighting class, wealth, and membership in a prestigious fraternity. Although some criticize the film as being idealistic or suggest that the young men only change for the “camera,” I find that the film is useful in dispersing stereotypes that all members of Kappa Alpha are racist or beyond change.

Ethnography as a Rhetorical Tool

The United Daughters of the Confederacy is an organization that describes themselves as a community organization (Bowers). My IRB to study United Daughters of the Confederacy was approved by Clemson University, but due to the organization’s meetings being closed to the general public, I was not able to attend a local meeting, as I had hoped.⁸⁴ I am still in contact with a local chapter and exploring ways that I might be able to attend a meeting in the future, even if just for a short amount of time, or before or after certain rituals take place. However, I was able to spend a day with an officer of a nearby chapter. The chapter I investigated pays homage to Jefferson Davis (Bowers). I didn’t press on the issue of Jefferson Davis, but since I have established a good rapport with the officer I interviewed, I plan to continue my research and hopefully ask more questions as my research continues.

⁸⁴ Additionally, the outbreak of Covid-19 halted two more meetings that were scheduled to take place.

As I gain more trust with the members, I hope to be able to approach more sensitive topics. For example, I did not bring up that Davis, the former president of the Confederacy, owned more than 100 slaves. Additionally, as Brian Lyman states in “‘Where was the Lord’: On Jefferson Davis’ birthday, 9 slave testimonies,” Davis led a government that “rest[ed] on the principle of white supremacy.” In Davis’ speech to the United States Senate in 1860, Davis called slavery “a form of civil government for those who by their nature are not fit to govern themselves” (“A Century of Lawmaking”). He continues: “We recognize the fact of the inferiority stamped upon that race by the Creator, and from cradle to grave, our government, as a civil institution, marks that inferiority” (“A Century of Lawmaking”). When I heard the name Jefferson Davis, I immediately had to put away some of my own bias. As a side note, this is one the hardest things to do if you are embarking on an ethnography. In short, I had to overlook the name in order to focus on what I intended to do, which was to conduct a successful interview.

The member I interviewed was quick to differentiate United Daughters of the Confederacy from the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Many times, the two groups are conflated, but I want to take a moment to differentiate them here. From my meeting with the officer, I learned why her chapter of United Daughters of the Confederacy sees themselves as a community organization, focused on remembering the military valor of those that fought and died for the South in the

Civil War. Recent media coverage of a Sons of Confederate Veterans Chapter in North Carolina focuses on the group's connection to white supremacy, which United Daughters of the Confederacy tries to distance themselves from (based on my interview). In March of 2020, a hotel in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina was facing criticism for hosting a Sons of Confederate Veterans event at the close of Black History month (Greig). Although the Southern Poverty Law Center does not designate Sons of Confederate Veterans as a hate group, the chapter in Raleigh-Durham was hosting a speaker at their event that did have ties to white supremacist groups (Greig). Marshall DeRosa was scheduled to speak at the Sons of Confederate Veterans Conference in Raleigh-Durham—DeRosa, a professor at Florida Atlantic University, was also a former faculty member of League of the South (Kotch). The Southern Poverty Law Center does designate League of the South as a hate group, and I have previously discussed how League of the South has a long and complicated past with college professors being members.

Thinking about ethnography as a rhetorical methodology might be helpful here. As Michał Mokrzan states in “The Rhetorical Turn in Anthropology,” the “rhetorical turn refers to the research perspective in anthropology which is focused on the interpretation of society and culture in which an important role is played by the tools and concepts of rhetoric” (1). This definition is important to my research, as I look to interpret society and culture to better understand white

supremacy, groups affiliated with white supremacy, and individuals and community groups that are outliers and have left extreme lifestyles behind. Connected to this are groups that employ specific white semiotics, like United Daughters of the Confederacy. As my interview with the member progressed, we talked about United Daughters of the Confederacy and their local role in the community — for example, the organization attempted to give out several college scholarships this year.

Throughout our conversation, focus kept returning to women's roles in the Civil War. This included caring for the wounded as nurses and hand sewing battle flags, uniforms, and blankets. When I asked about the role of African American women in the Civil War, my informant replied she "had not thought about that aspect of the war" (Bowers). Additionally, she did not know of any chapters with African American members. As we continued our conversation, the member also discussed how one of the other main goals of United Daughters of the Confederacy was honoring those that died. For example, she talked about how many women lost sons that were forced to fight during the war. She said many believed in the cause, while others were fighting because they had to. She felt these deaths needed to be remembered and honored, which is part of what the organization does. She explained how members of United Daughters of the Confederacy will make sure that the graves of Confederate soldiers are carefully marked and cared for.

The officer also spoke at length with disgust about domestic terrorist Dylann Roof, and how she did not want others conflating the Confederate battle flag with white supremacists. To the member, the Confederate battle flag should only be displayed to honor those that died in the war. Although a very limited sample, I am hoping this interview will be one of many. This member seemed open to engaging in dialogue about the use of the battle flag as a symbol and offered ways that her organization might reach out to minority groups in the community. She admitted these conversations might be difficult at first, but hopefully they would be productive in the long run.

Conclusion

Overall, this dissertation shaped the construction of white supremacy, beginning with an investigation into current events that have solidified the exigency of my research. I provide an overview of events throughout the United States that are related to the circulation of both Confederate ideology and white supremacy. These events take place in states within the former Confederacy, like Tennessee, and in states far from the former Confederacy, like California. I also provide an example of how Confederate ideology has circulated to Europe, with the Confederate battle flag being flown in Poland to welcome President Trump in 2016. The events I focus on highlight the rhetorical exigence of not just this dissertation, but also future research.

I then delve into the symbol of the Confederate battle flag, and why we should study the flag as scholars. Throughout Chapter Two, I trace the Confederate/Historical aspects of the flag and Confederate ideology. Within this investigation I also focus on the concept of resentment rhetoric, and how resentment rhetorically functions to eventually lead to and produce white supremacy. Perpetuation of antebellum nostalgia (including plantations, slavery, and the Civil War), leads to a type of rhetorical insistence. This rhetorical insistence becomes self-referential. Through this rhetorical insistence emerge events like the Old South balls and the prominent displays of the Confederate battle flag. The next step of this is full-blown white supremacy, with an example being the riots in Charlottesville.

The riots in Charlottesville bring us to Chapter Three, which is where I rhetorically analyze *A Fair Hearing: The Alt-Right in the Words of Its Members and Leaders*. I analyze *A Fair Hearing* due to its recent publication following the Unite the Right rally. The edited collection, working as a mixture of alt-right, neo-Confederate, and Nazi ideology, employs empty rhetoric to engage with current followers and garner new ones. As I discuss, empty rhetoric functions as emotional force (Pathos) without logic (Logos). With an understanding of *A Fair Hearing*, we are better equipped as rhetoricians to dismantle the type of rhetoric that is employed by the alt-right and white supremacists. Additionally, Chapter

Three also highlights the important connection between the alt-right, white supremacy, and organizations like League of the South.

As I move into Chapter Four, I begin to discuss the importance of action, specifically through pedagogy. I use examples of resentment rhetoric posted in an online forum to set up Chapter Four, and I then bring in ways to combat and liquify what I term “frozen loci.” By “frozen loci,” I specifically mean stagnated ideas and ideology that can be fractured and eventually dismantled through pedagogical practices such as Ratcliffe’s theory of rhetorical listening, Wheatley’s notion of positive disturbance, and Bakhtin’s philosophy of language, also known as Dialogism. I also speak at length about including underrepresented scholars that might not always show up on a traditional syllabus. These include writers and scholars like Tina Elroy Ansa, Mae Henderson, Guy Davenport, and others. Overall, the blending of these theories and scholarship results in what I call a New Dialogism. Implementing a New Dialogism within a classroom setting provides for new ways of knowing, making, and doing. As I end Chapter Four, we are perfectly poised to begin Chapter Five, this final chapter.

Chapter Five was exciting to write, as I was able to highlight the work of community rhetors in the fight against white supremacy. The community rhetor is an important and inspiring figure in the fight against supremacy, and I am looking forward to joining forces with these rhetors as I continue my research on the rhetorical construction of white supremacy. Additionally, ethnography is an

important methodology for any rhetorician's toolkit (as long as they are properly trained by an anthropologist).⁸⁵ The last part of Chapter Five discusses the beginning of an ethnography with United Daughters of the Confederacy, an ethnography I hope to continue in the future. Conducting this ethnography will allow me to continue important research on a group that uses white/Confederate semiotics. United Daughters of the Confederacy is a self-described community organization, which draws on my claim that it is important to participate in participatory rhetoric.

The overall goal of this dissertation was to not only explicate how white supremacy is rhetorically constructed, but also to promote scholarship for activism. It is imperative to think about how we might engage with the community around us. And ultimately, as rhetoricians, we must teach those around us the importance of responsible rhetoric.

⁸⁵ Thank you, Dr. John "Mike" Coggeshall!

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